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Editor

Janardan Bista

Publisher

Department of Mass Communication and Journalism

School of Humanities and Social Sciences

KANTIPUR CITY COLLEGE

(Affiliated to Purbanchal University)

Putalisadak, Kathmandu, Nepal

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Editorial

The changing world of mass media continues to face new challenges. In so-called post-truth era and the rampant culture of fake news in recent days, the challenges are further multiplied. With growth in web and social media, in particular, journalism is facing technical challenges ahead and it is also due to changing nature of human behaviour such as their changes in attitude, preferences and demands. In today's digital era, people do believe in emotions rather than facts and mostly their opinions are based on their personal intuitions, feelings and emotions instead of being rational, logical and listening to statistics and facts — the concept of post-truth incorporates quite the same.

In such context, the entire world of media and journalism needs to be further redefined. At this juncture, intellectual and academic circle should take a leading role in filling this gap through their research works. Acknowledging this fact, *Department of Mass Communication & Journalism at Kantipur City College* has come forward to make an attempt to support professional journalism by accelerating such academic exercises through this publication.

The journal comprises different areas of knowledge to broaden the academic horizon of media and journalism from the perspectives to ethical consideration in the changed scenario. *Prof. Rama Krishna Regmee* reveals an idea of self regulation for responsible press emphasizing on restraints and self disciplines to meet quality standards of media contents from the point of production to the presentation. Media scholar, *Dr. Bhanubhakta Acharya* concludes that the proper display of emotions changes the behaviour of audience by presenting the case of the voting behaviour demonstrated by audience at an Indian reality show. Media professional and scholar *Janardan Bista* presents his study on radio broadcasting in times of disaster; media professional and RTI scholar *Yek Raj Pathak* carries the detailed study on RTI audit. *Bigyan Sharma* writes analyzes the loopholes at communication of PM office of Nepal, while *Dr. Dipesh KC* analyzes media from criminology perspectives. *Abhas D Rajopadhyaya* critically questions the educational role of Nepali media, especially after the 2015 earthquake, while *Sujeena Shaky* surveys the status of development journalism in Nepal. *Rajesh Pathak* analyzes the media behaviour owing to rise and fall of popularity of Modi government in terms of Nepal-India bilateral relations. All these studies will not only enrich academia but also help guide the society towards better path through competent application of academic knowledge into the professional arena.

I extend sincere thanks to the management of *Kantipur City College* for its continuous support for this second volume of *KCC Media Journal*. I thank *Prof. Rama Krishna Regmee*, Chair of Humanities and Social Sciences, for his invaluable guidance and encouragement and *Abhas D Rajopadhyaya*, who made the publication possible. We are highly grateful to contributors and everyone who supported us in different ways to ensure this journal at hands.

I believe this journal will be a remarkable step to fill the research gap in media and journalism sector of the country to some extent and humbly request all to mount further discourse being based on the articles included.

Messages

Research is a pillar for excellence

Research has been accepted as one of the pillars in ensuring academic excellence of *Kantipur City College*. Quest for new knowledge is a thirst for KCC, besides enriching the existing knowledge through wisely designed curricular/academic activities. KCC media journal opens the avenue in exploring new insights in resolving the problems of society. In this sense, the journal may also contribute to the social responsibility of KCC by promoting such a noble cause.

I firmly believe, the articles contributed in this journal by scholars and researchers of different specializations have apparently provided readers a window to see the world of communication and media from the academic viewpoint, which contributes to a healthy practice of the field.



Suman Katawal
Chairperson



Pralhad Karki
Managing Director

Publication bridges academia and profession

KCC Media journal is the reflection of research-priority of Kantipur City College beyond its regular academic programs. The topics explored in these articles can contribute to resolution of many social problems and open the door for further debates and discussions. Such academic efforts of our faculties will help fill the gap between academia and professional arena.

In the other dimension, the publication of research journal of such kind will boost the research drive of our students and help create conducive environment to dig out new knowledge. I hope this culture of publication under all faculties, including this one under the faculty of Mass Communication and Journalism will remain intact forever setting an ample example for other educational institutions as well.

An inspiration for all

Kantipur City College has always put itself in forefront in delivering quality education or enhancing academic exercise through various co-curricular activities. Publication of the second volume of KCC Media journal is a part of the same. *KCC Media Journal* accelerates the culture of academic research in the areas of media that simply cross KCC premises and becomes public property for the broader cause of the society.

I believe that this academic journal will not only serve scholars (to present the findings of their studies) and readers (to grasp knowledge on various areas of study), but also inspire KCC students to carry out the research independently in the areas of their interest and add additional stones in enriching research world.



Raju Kattel
Acting Principal



Rajiv Timalisina
*MA MCJ Program
Coordinator*

Continuity will be our target

We waited a total of 15 years for the first academic book-size publication of the Department of Mass Communication & Journalism at KCC. Only in 2015 in the aftermath of the earthquake we could make the first publication of this sort. Again, it took us long to bring out the second issue in 2018. It was a challenging test for us for the two continuous publications under two different editors.

As a coordinator for this journal, it is a great honor to work in this publication under the advice of Prof. Rama Krishna Regmee, a renowned media-expert who has been associated with us since the start of MA MCJ course at KCC and many other scholars. As we move ahead with academics, we sincerely look forth to giving continuity to this peer-reviewed annual journal.



KCC MEDIA JOURNAL

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Self-Regulation: A Robust Drive towards Responsible Press

PROF. RAMA KRISHNA REGMEE

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Abstract

Journalists and media organizations charge and recharge public sphere perennially through information-flow. Doing so is a great responsibility and it requires a very high sense of duty and commitment to accountability. Self-restraint is, therefore, essential for media workers and institutions for maintaining a fine balance between their right to report and duty to respect people's rights and the society they live in. It, however, differs significantly from self-censorship in idea, goal and method. One way to enrich the smart way of communicating in digital era could be: pursuing self-regulation in every finger-touch or push or posting.

Keywords: freedom of expression, information-flow, self-censorship, editorial guidelines, positive psychology, next-level journalism, temperance, moderation, crowd criticism, complaint mechanism

Self-regulation, in media discourse and practice, is a tool to ensure accountability developed by practitioners and scholars for maintaining professional standards of journalism and proactive endeavor of journalists to be responsive to those, who use media and stands for not being carried away making media a reliable institution in society. It actually seeks to enhance the quality of information that flows through media by sanitizing all the professional processes of media production. Since journalists and media organizations perform in public sphere they have to be conscious of their duties, responsibilities and rights at individual and institutional levels. Self-restraint is, therefore, essential for media workers and institutions.

Media, mass communication scholars believe, has power to shape public opinion, influence people's behaviour and enable them to take informed decisions in life, business and professions. Abuse of media in ways ranging from simple manipulation to knotty black propaganda could adversely affect the society in various ways. If the people engaged in media are not careful about it they would knowingly or unknowingly be instrumental in harming the society through various malpractices. Negligence in this regard would cost media a lot: it will lose the ultimate trust of the people; the very foundation of the social capital the media could have in its possession. That is why the discourse of self-regulation in media accompanied by practicing tools has developed over time in the media sector in all

countries, where press is free. In situations where press is controlled, the state or government administers regulatory measures with force or without it to keep media disciplined mostly for the authority's benefits arguing that it is ultimately for public interest.

The two concepts — self-regulation and self-censorship — should not be construed as the same. They are quite different in concept, approach, and mission. The former represents by temptations, sensational urges and negativity at any point of media production. Not triggered by fear or any other motive, it provides for willingness to open room for corrections, further accommodations, inclusiveness or more balance and appropriate consideration of complaints against media products. The latter, however, denotes a sense of fear in using editorial judgment in making a choice in journalistic production process. It is solely guided by the desire to protect self or self-interest from harm or damage or government or non-state-actors' actions like arrest, jail, persecution, physical violence or death or threats of death or loss of job or facilities.

Journalists in actual workplace have to take a number of decisions on issues like story ideation, sources of information, story narration and story presentation, besides making a judgment on newsworthiness, news sense, selecting or filtering information, facts, placement of news-products, layout and design and finding a context to what they produce. Self-regulation helps them to standardize their products with a sense

of responsibility. Self-censorship renders journalists unable to do their best in given circumstances. It makes them overcautious, consequence-conscious, escapist and too timid to take even a calculated professional risk. Self-regulation is constructive and is instrumental in building confidence, while self-censorship is disabling and dulls whatever competence, spirit and energy journalists possess. Scholars in European context regard self-regulation

"as a joint endeavour by media professionals to set up voluntary editorial guidelines and abide by them in a learning process open to the public. By doing so, the independent media accept their share of responsibility for the quality of public discourse in the nation while fully preserving their editorial autonomy in shaping it."

Five reasons forwarded to justify self-regulation are mentioned by Haraszti in *The Media Self-Regulation Guidebook* (2008:12):

- power to preserve editorial freedom
- daunt state interference
- promote media quality
- indicate accountability
- facilitate people to access media

The UNESCO publication *The Importance of Self-regulation of the Media in Upholding Freedom of Expression* (2011) by Andrew Puddephatt frames discussion of self-regulation against the backdrop of media environment that is capable of supporting free expression. Such environment, it argues, is characterized by a diverse media environment, part public, part private and part community, a plurality of different media outlets and a system that is broadly self-regulating with the exception of broadcast media (where spectrum has been limited and regulatory body allocated bandwidth). UNESCO adopted the same while developing Media Development Indicators in its 2008 report entitled *The Importance of Self Regulation of the Media in Upholding Freedom of Expression* (2011:10).

The state, UNESCO urges in the publication, should stay out of regulating media because of its importance in supporting the human right to freedom of expression. Media outlets are crucial to the exercise of freedom of expression, because they provide the public platform through which this right is effectively exercised. Self-regulation, according to UNESCO, is a combination of standards setting out the appropriate codes of behaviour for the media that are necessary to support the freedom of expression and process how those behaviours will be monitored and held to account (p. 12).

Theoretical Perspectives of Self-Regulation

Studying self-regulation in media through theoretical perspectives could be revealing: it demonstrates how the concept has been handled by scholars over time and in several disciplines. Self-regulation has been regarded by some as virtue to be pursued by human beings in life and in all its pursuits, while it has been taken to be part of legal provisions by others. Many refer to self-regulation as a part of professional code of conduct applicable to all public pursuits.

Media scholars have derived the ideas from various sources, added their own original touch to them and applied them to self-regulation in the media sector. In doing so, they have always sought to fit self-regulation in contributing to the noble values of freedom of expression and dignified goal of free press. They are convinced that self-regulation is the best way to preserve the independence of press. Self-regulation, scholars have found, generates among practitioners and institutions positive energy and confidence which could in turn be effective in checking external influence, government control or other types of pressure on press. Scholars see in self-regulation a practical concept: media people know the media environment best and they could formulate regulations in the way that can best serve the best public interest, while preserving the values of free press and not sacrificing it for fulfilling profit only commercial interests. Self-regulation knows no border and it is adjustable in all situations of media – local, national or global. Since self-regulation evolves from among the practitioners and is not imposed by others or from above (highly-placed decision-makers), it could be followed with a sense of professional commitment guaranteeing high rate of compliance.

The root of the concept of self-regulation could be found in the discourse on self-restraint or temperance or moderation or voluntary initiative in disciplining self. Theories were later built up under the auspices of ancient thinkers, philosophers and scholars for promoting self-regulation as a virtue. They sought to motivate people to first understand the importance of disciplining senses, body and mind and then pursue ways to keep them under control and later apply them to professions. The virtue of self-regulation that they advocated could be applicable to all walks of human life because they stress restraint from retaliation in the form of non-violence and forgiveness, restraint from arrogance in the form of humility and modesty, restraint from excesses such as splurging now

(extravagance) in the form of prudence, restraint from excessive anger or craving for something in the form of calmness and self-control.¹

Various scholars have discussed self-regulation indirectly particularly codes of media sector as informal forces to make media responsible. The American Society of Newspaper Editors (ASNE) voiced for it without using the term self-regulation to maintain integrity in media as it adopted the Canons of Journalism (1922) and considered it important to re-indicate it, while revising and renaming the document as ASNE Statement of Principles (1975). All six values pointed out clearly in its six articles — Responsibility, Freedom of the Press, Independence, Truth and Accuracy, Impartiality and Fair Play — cannot be practiced without a sense of self regulation.

Another statement of press freedom principles, *Windhoek Declaration*, adopted by African Newspaper Journalists in 1991 and later endorsed by the UNESCO General Conference, also expects indirectly self-regulation from journalists for ensuring free, independent and pluralistic media. Ten years later, when broadcasters also wanted to have a declaration similar to *Windhoek Declaration* in 2000, the issue was not missed out. Self-regulation was considered important for maintaining integrity and freedom in broadcasting particularly diverse and independent products of public interest at public, commercial or community media.

Media persons could also derive inspiration from moralists who advise all to perceive others as self or treat others as one would wish to be treated. Their sense of responsibility would be further consolidated if they could apply this to their professional practices (Vivian, 1997:499).

Psychologists in modern times, particularly those engaged in positive psychology movement, have also begun to take up self-restraint as one of six virtues; the others, they mention in this regard, are: wisdom, courage, humanity, justice and transcendence (spirituality). Positive psychology is about building not just a pleasant life, observes Seligman, but also a good life that engages one's skills, and a meaningful life that points beyond one-self. "Thus the second pillar, positive character, focuses on exploring and enhancing creativity courage, compassion, integrity, self control, leadership, wisdom and spirituality" (Myers, 2010:480).

The first pillar of the positive psychology movement has been described as related to the satisfaction with the past, happiness over the present and optimism about future, while the third pillar refers to positive groups, communities and cultures which contribute to the components that build up positive social ecology.

Quotes on Self-Regulation

A survey of some famous quotes on self-regulation reveals the general trend that wise people pursue in expressing views on self-discipline.²

To Plato (427-347 BCE), Greek philosopher, "the first and best victory is to conquer self." John Foster (1941-2009 AD), an author, observed "A man without decision of character can never be said to belong to himself.... He belongs to whatever can make captive of him." "It is necessary to try to surpass one's self always: this occupation ought to last as long as life", noted Queen Christina of Sweden (1626-1689 AD). Lao Tzu (? – 531 AD) clarified "Mastering others is strength. Mastering yourself is true power." Horace (65-8 BCE) warned "Rule your mind or it will rule you."

Founder of modern Olympic Games Pierre de Coubertin (1863-1937 AD) pointed out the value of self-discipline as he noted: "The most important thing in the Olympic Games is not winning, but taking part, the essential thing in life is not conquering but fighting well." The concept of self-regulation has drawn the attention of various scholars.

Self-Regulation in Religions

Self-regulation of mind and body or self-regulation in action, word and thought also features in various religious pursuits. A general study reveals that the concept has been discussed in various ways and vocabularies across cultures and eras in the world. The great philosophy and thinking that they possess has drawn the attention of various scholars over the years in different countries in the East and the West. An attempt has been made here to paraphrase them in a simple way understandable to commoners, who use media and those who contribute to media: the Noble Eightfold Path of Buddhism refers to the need for, among others, avoiding misconduct and pursuing the cause of right speech and right action. The *Vedas* and *Upanishads* of Hinduism, underline in different contexts, the need for self restraint, compassion and

¹ Ideas expressed in Wikipedia referring to Schwarzer, Ralf. (2012), accessed April 29, 2017.

² Discipline quotes from www.leadershipnow.com. Retrieved on 3 March 2017.

love for all sentient life and charity (*Brihadaranayak Upanishad*). Ten Commandments, widely quoted great Biblical Principles of Christianity, refer to self-control as Fruits of Spirit and point out four dimensions of temperance: forgiveness, humility, prudence and self-regulation. Islam has a special space for self control; the fasting month of Ramadan is a great exercise in self-control and those who observe it share the feeling that resilience gets built up through it.

Applying Self-Regulation to Media

The importance of self-regulation in media was recognized long ago and several attempts appear to have been made for ensuring it. The codes of conduct for journalists developed over different eras in various countries mirror the spirit in a realistic manner. The codes generally emphasize respect for truth and the right of the public to truth, the right of fair comment and criticism, factual and objective reporting, use of fair methods to obtain information, the willingness to correct mistakes and respecting the confidentiality of sources among others.

Editorial independence is another component that is emphasized while applying self-regulation to media. Similarly, the need for media organizations to develop their own professional guidelines, compatible with the universally accepted values incorporated in codes of conduct, is emphasized. Journalists should bear in mind that they have a duty to uphold the standards — the codes, editorial independence, and professional guidelines — in practice, despite numerous challenges they might face in this regard.

Complaint mechanism is another tool developed for motivating journalists to be responsible and responsive to media users and consumers. The instrument in one hand ensures that voices of general public are respected and addressed properly and guarantees, on the other hand, appropriate remedy for victims of media abuse.

The latest way to demonstrate the realistic way media operates is the Global Reporting Initiative, a tool to disclose information to ensure transparency. Media becomes, through this, an open house for all to scrutinize it because the norm of GRI is to shed light, among others (formality-matters essential for progress report of given period), on performance in relation to editorial commitment, observation of press-norms and voluntary initiatives undertaken for upholding standards of journalism.

Trends in Nepali News-Production Room

Nepali media, today, needs a thorough discussion on self-regulation to make its products professional and standardized and to practice a healthy process in all segments of media production. All media workers require knowledge and skills related to self-regulation. Reporters and producers should know how sources could manipulate them for their petty interest. There is a need for Nepali media to develop journalistic models for responding to complaints, errors, accusations, corrections, wrong sources, false information, imbalance, etc. A fair way of handling conflict of interest, respecting privacy of citizens safeguarding social harmony, while serving the cause of contributing to informed citizenry should be pursued. Similarly, media houses and journalists should be specifically acquainted, in the interest of public service, with ways not to disturb the information-flow and not to allow the true message be polluted by the pull of advertisement, glamour of entertainment and pressing thirst of viral-wave.

Various incidents, in which Nepali media lost its esteem because of its failure to control itself, have been publicized over time in different contexts and they clearly indicate the urgent need for self-restraint. A few much talked examples, in this regard, would be in order at this point. A person wounded in People's Movement 1990 and recognized as victim could get free and extensive publicity of a great hero in various platforms of Nepali media for several years without being questioned about his criminal background of selling own son for money (Media reports, 2060, 2070, 2071, 2073 BS).

Those who have victimized others have been able to use Nepali media as victims (Media Reports, 2073 BS). Several people pretending to have high attractive degrees of western universities and high level connection in foreign countries have enjoyed extensive print and electronic coverage in interviews with none attempting in advance to verify their assertion (Media Reports, 2068 & 2073 BS). News about heroic pious deed of a girl (returning to owner 91 lac rupees found by her) rocked the nation once in 2011 before all knew it was simply false. That was actually replication of another news published in 2003 (which was later found to be fake) in which one person was profiled as being billionaire from a mere capital of five dollars.

News accusing a social worker of being engaged in or promoting sexual misconduct also got published widely

and drew national attention. It was later found to be untrue but the damage had already been done (Media Reports, 2014). A pattern of some Nepali media breaking some corruption case through in-depth reporting and others beginning to defend those mentioned in the corruption by hook or by crook appears to have been institutionalized. One case in 2010 reveals the trend best in this regard. The pattern got repeated in different cases and contexts over the years. Most corruption cases, according to a researcher focused on anti-corruption, reported in the media actually get covered differently in media outlets; the style and coverage also differs and ranges from non-coverage, indifference or trivialization to defense coverage for intentional cover-up. The scenario of media not knowing ways to avoid brotherly or sisterly wrestle in open race for capturing advertisements, readers, listeners, viewers and media users is something Nepalese are compelled to see quite often. This demands input of self-regulation.

Why Self-Regulation?

The latest response to the query comes from none, but editors — particularly those attached to real news force and processes that result in multiple media products. Editors, in recent times, felt worried over the low level of trust between media and the public, particularly in the digital era and revisited the values that they should restore for rebuilding the trust between the public and professional journalism. In the process they worked out five principles for what they termed "Next Level Journalism." Marcelo Rech, President of the World Editors Forum, observed in Cartagena, Colombia in 2016:

"Given the current reality where false and distorted information is easily shared, we need to distinguish professional journalism and secure greater public recognition of its relevance. At this next level, the search for truth, a concept that lies at the genesis of journalism, is now more necessary than ever."

One of the five principles re-emphasized by editors emphasized journalistic ethics as an integral part of the key values (others being credibility, independence, accuracy, transparency and pluralism) essential for confirming a relationship of trust with the public in the backdrop of hyper-information.

Although editors did not specifically define journalistic ethics, the doctrines they prescribed were more than the parameters of the same and they obviously demanded self-regulation and discipline from journalists. "Next-level journalism", they noted, "is

distinguished from other content by the vigilant and diligent questioning and verification of material circulating on social media."

The principles acknowledge social media "as a source of information for further fact-checking and as a platform for leveraging professional content." The principles counsel journalists to positively serve the society and establish "news brands as a trusted certificate of origin for content." "Go beyond basic facts", another principle stresses, and "analyze, contextualize, investigate, make opinion more informed" to render news "knowledge that empowers." Next-level journalism should be driven by trust and the guiding principles of social relevance, legitimate interest and truthfulness.

The principles would facilitate media persons to practice self-regulation, as they continue their journey into future in the digital-era-journalism. It would motivate them to prove that self-regulation is not just an academic luxury topic or a leisure-time talking-point, but something to practice in myriad phases or processes of media production.

At a time when crowd criticism of media (audience-posted rejoinders of varied types) is more a rule than an exception, the practice of self-regulation acquires further relevance to all media producers. Journalists should be double-careful in institutionalizing self-discipline for what they print or air or post, at any point of time, could be scrutinized not only by the Press Council, press critics, press gate-keepers or any other legal policing bodies, but by all those who use media.

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Emotional Authenticity vs. Ethnic Nationalism: A Case of *Indian Idol 3*

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Abstract

Scholars argue that authenticity of reality television shows depends on emotional appeals of the participants who perform on stage or on screens. The display of emotions in the forms of tears, sobbing, gestures and confessional monologues can motivate audiences to vote them as winners of reality TV programs. By using a case study of the Indian Idol-3, this article argues that ethnic nationalism and socio-cultural contexts, regardless of emotional appeals, can play a powerful role in determining the winners of such reality TV shows, particularly in South Asian countries. This article uses critical analysis method, in which ten episodes of the Indian Idol-3 were observed and twelve scholarly journal articles on various dimensions of reality television shows were reviewed. Additionally, this article interprets the Indian Idol-3 from multiple perspectives, including Aslama and Patti's (2006) emotional determinism, Cover's (2006) notion of interactivity, and Cooley's ([1902]1964) looking-glass self.

Keywords: Indian Idol-3, reality TV show, emotional determinism, ethnic nationalism, critical analysis method, looking-glass self, Nepalese community.

Introduction

Many scholars have discussed much about the concept of authenticity in different reality television programs, and emotions as determining factors (Aslama & Pantti, 2006; Bonsu, Darmody & Parmentier, 2010; Hall, 2009; Hirdman, 2011; Palmer, 2010; Wood & Skeggs, 2010). For them, use of extreme emotions plays a key role to determine 'realness' in reality-based television shows.

Holmes (2004) finds that the display of emotion and the consequent promise of intimacy with those on-screen is the key of authenticity construction in popular music and stardom (p. 158). Aslama and Pantti (2006) argue that

"reality television has reinvented and refined confessional monologue of theatrical tradition which becomes the stage for emotional expression and self disclosure.... Participants affirm repeatedly that their feelings are real, despite the acknowledged artificiality of these setting in which these feelings arise" (pp. 172, 178).

In Wood and Skeggs's (2010) terms, "the reciting of emotion becomes an index of credibility" (p. 103), and emotional expressions (such as tear, sobbing, and confessional monologues) are supposed more realistic and authentic activities. Hence, emotion is being a

determinant factor to create authenticity in the reality TV programs.

Moreover, emotional realness or authenticity is achieved through strategic editing, which is "designed to offer a viable product that recognizes the emotional intensity needed to develop affective connection to audiences" (Bonsu, Darmody & Parmentier, 2010, p. 101), and by doing so producers tend to encourage particular behaviour (Hall, 2009, p. 528). Holmes (2004) considers this situation as "a kind of super-enhanced realism", which offers a point of view that "acts as a guarantor of authentic and real emotion" (p. 161).

Katz and Liebes's (1990) study on soap opera found that television content could have different meanings for different socio-cultural groups. In the same way, Morley (1992) states that members of given culture will tend to share a cultural orientation toward decoding messages in clear ways, framed by shared socio-cultural experiences and practices. This study, therefore, discusses how the notion of ethnic nationalism in the Indian reality television – through interactivity and SMS voting campaigns – supersedes the theatrical confessional monologue and emotional expression. This paper primarily focuses on the third season of the *Indian Idol*, an Indian version of *Pop Idol* (UK), that how Nepalese communities were motivated

and mobilized to make their ethnic idol win the singing competition. I argue that emotional performance on the stage, as Aslama and Pantti (2006) and other scholars pointed out, is not only the case to determine authenticity but in the South Asian context, the ethnic-nationalism and socio-cultural aspects play a vital role. I would also examine how interactivity has facilitated the successes of participants of reality television, rather than their emotional releases from the stage.

Research Methodology

For this study, I have used critical analysis method based on the already published a dozen of scientific articles in various journals and watched 10 episodes of *Indian Idol-3* and three episodes of *Sa Re Ga Ma Pa-2008*, both of them are singing completion reality shows broadcast through different televisions in India. For the purpose of critical analysis of the *Indian Idol-3* with regard to emotional determinism versus ethnic nationalism, I have used "emotional determinism" (Aslama & Pantti, 2006), interactivity (Cover, 2006), and the notion of "looking-glass self" (Cooley, [1902]1964). In addition, Horkheimer's (1982) critical theory is also applied to analyze the identity issues of ethnic Nepalese in India.

Synopsis of Indian Idol-3

Indian Idol, a franchised version of *Pop Idol* (UK), is one of the most popular programs broadcast through Sony Television, India since 2005. In this program, the selection process of the top 12 finalists depends on the participants' votes; participant with least votes is eliminated from the next round, and even judges cannot save such participant from elimination. Since Hindi is known in many South Asian countries, the singing competition is not just a reality television program, but like a festival of music in the entire region (Punathambekar, 2010a).

The third season of the *Indian Idol-2007* broadcasted from 4 May to 23 September 2007, in which Alisha Chinai (pop singer), Anu Malik (music composer), Udit Narayan Jha (singer) and Javed Akhtar (lyricist) were the judges. In that season, Prashant Tamang and Amit Paul were two of the 12 finalists, representing Nepali community and Bengali community respectively from North-East India. This article mainly focuses on Prashant and socio-political movements in India's West Bengal province (in which Prashant's hometown Darjeeling lies), which brought the Nepalese ethnic minority in national political attention.

During the program, people of Nepalese origin across India and Nepal established hundreds of fan clubs, launched rallies and SMS voting campaigns – voting to a particular candidate through mobile phone's short message service – to make him win as "pride of the hills" (Punathambekar, 2010b, p. 242). In addition, Nepalese communities in Bhutan, Brunei Hong Kong, the United Kingdom and Middle-East countries launched a "Save Prashant" campaign to raise fund for SMS (short message service) voting to make their ethnic representative win the contest. "During the final stages of the contest, 600 people were reportedly hired to send SMSes round the clock to secure Prashant as a winner" (Punathambekar, 2010b, p. 242). On the finale of the program on 23 September 2007, Sony Television announced that total 70 million SMS votes were received and Prashant won the title with an overwhelming majority.

Analysis and Discussion

Emotional determinism versus ethnic nationalism

Aslama and Pantti (2006) used the term "emotional determinism" to indicate the authenticity of the "real-self" in the reality shows through emotional expression. According to them, emotional determinism "celebrates public displays of feelings as a means of therapeutic disclosure and regards one's feelings as a foundation of authenticity, the true self" (2006, p. 181). In a similar tone, Palmer (2010) also agrees that emotional factors are determinative to create authenticity in reality program. He writes

"[reality] programs work to generate a consensus between audience, experts, and... the formats are designed to encourage passionate reactions from the subjects themselves as well as friends, relatives, presenters and audiences live and at home" (Palmer, 2010, p. 71).

In a study upon the ethnic audiences, Katz and Liebes (1990) found that media contents have different meanings for audiences from different socio-cultural backgrounds. I would, therefore, argue that emotions do not necessarily apply to determine authenticity of characters' gestures in reality television, but it depends upon the socio-cultural contexts of the audiences. In developing countries of South Asia, ethnic identity and regionalism play a determining role for the success or failure of a participant in reality television. Snyder (1993) further broadens the terms ethnic identity and regionalism as "ethnic nationalism", which means trusting those people only who share common

language, culture and ancestry "when existing institutions are not fulfilling people's basic needs, and when satisfactory alternative structures are not readily available" (p. 86), and it is because of economic disparity and discrimination in a specific ethnic identity (Dingley & Morgan, 2005).

The Nepalese community is one of the marginalized groups in India, the second largest country by population in the world. The community members are often misrepresented and stereotyped by Indian media and middle class people as *Gurkhas* or the security guards (Punathambekar, 2010b). By drawing attention of millions of people, the reality television program *Indian Idol-3* played a key role in altering the dynamics of *Gorkha* nationalism (Punathambekar, 2010b, p. 242).

The ethnicity representation issue is not just a case in *Indian Idol-3*; there are several other reality programs such as *Sa Re Ga Ma Pa* from ZEE TV, *Voice of India* from Doordarshan – Indian national television, (both programs are singing competition-related reality shows) and many others. Participants' success and failure in these reality shows is determined on the basis of SMS votes sent by the audiences during the specified time frame. Furthermore, the program producers and advertisers organize different promotional activities such as rallies, campaigns and musical programs targeting the contestant's ethnicity and regionalism, which can garner higher TRPs (Punathambekar, 2010b).

Aslama and Pantti (2006) argue that during the theatrical performance confessional monologue generates emotion, which is the key to determine authenticity. For Hirdman (2011), tear is a necessary element and an authenticity marker. On the basis of participants' tears and bodily emotional outbursts during the stage performance, audiences assess the authenticity and realness (pp. 30-31). However, participants of *Indian Idol-3*, who were strongly backed by ethnic supporters, were not telling anything emotional and shedding tears even if the judges gave poor evaluation remarks. During the last three episodes before the finale, Prashant received critical evaluations from the judges, but did not make any confessional remarks, and did not drop any tears on the stage or before the camera, but just grinned and tolerated the situation. Punathambekar (2010b) points out that the two finalists Prashant and Amit Paul (from Bengali community) managed to secure top two positions on the power of ethnic regionalism and SMS

voting (p. 248). After Prashant won the *Indian Idol* contest, a journalist of *The Hindu*, an English daily newspaper from India, wrote:

I am not against Prashant. He is a good singer but when it comes to pure talent and singing capabilities he scores below Amit. The final should have been between Emon Chatterjee and Amit Paul. Both Amit and Emon score higher than Prashant when it comes to voice quality and singing capabilities. (Bhattacharjee, 2007)

There are other evidences of ethnic nationalism significantly experienced in India owing to reality television programs. For example, the audiences of the *Sa Re Ga Ma Pa*, singing competition from ZEE TV, ousted the most popular contestant Zaheer Abbas from Pakistan immediately after the Mumbai attack (26 November 2008), which prolonged for 60 hours and took lives of 164 people (Mannathukaren, 2010). The only cause of Abbas's elimination was his Pakistani identity. Similarly, in January 2007, Bollywood actress Shilpa Shetty was the subject of racist bullying in the *Celebrity Big Brother* (run by Channel-4, UK) by Jade Goody, another housemate from Britain, which sparked a national identity issue in India (Zacharias & Arthurs, 2007). Hence, these evidences of reality television can be considered as the repercussion of ethnic nationalism rather than the staged/performed emotions by participants.

Authenticity through interactivity

Authenticity is a key factor of popularity of the globally franchised reality television programs: for Aslama and Pantti (2006), it is based on emotional authenticity to a large extent (p. 177). In present-day television formats, authenticity is achieved through the validation of emotional talk. Tears, emotional confessions and other bodily signs of genuine feelings confirm authentic display of emotion, which entertains the audience and promote viewership (Aslama & Pantti, 2006, pp. 169-170).

Palmer (2010) has slightly different opinion to understand authenticity, which requires "validation of others" (p. 76) and for Cover (2010) this validation can be achieved through interactivity in various forms of multi-media, such as internet updates, feedback forums, and most recently SMS text messaging. Weisethaunet and Lindberg (2010) also agree with Cover's (2006) notion of authenticity through interactivity and point out that authenticity of musical production is being generated through interactivity of the audiences.

As Cover (2006) argues, interactivity – in the form of audience participation in the reality television – is a cultural desire to participate in the creation of a text, which has been denied by previous media system. It allows users to expand their understanding of communication and manipulate new media text. The program production team and the audiences can interact through various forms of new media including SMS texting. Cover (2006) further points out that the new media technologies empower the audience's participation, which "makes authorial control harder" (p. 140). In the context of Indian reality television programs, authenticity is measured through interactivity of the audiences, SMS voting from audiences in particular. As the judges have limited role of critical evaluation of contestants of reality television programs such as *Indian Idol* and *Sa Re Ga Ma Pa*, the winning or losing is determined by the volume of tele/cell phone SMSes.

However, Bhattacharjee (2007) argues that the real talent can be overshadowed by the SMS campaign, because a person with a large ethno-cultural support can be the winner. To support Prashant and Amit, social and political leaders of their ethnicity spent thousands of rupees (Indian currency) and distributed dozens of mobile phone sets to ensure vigorously sending SMSes to the given number and to secure the position in every new episode (Bhattacharjee, 2007). Rallies and signature campaigns were organized in many places of West Bengal and Meghalaya (both Indian provinces) to raise funds for voting and encourage people to vote again and again (Punathambekar, 2010b, pp. 242-243).

Cooley's "looking-glass self" effect

The idea of authenticity can be examined from Charles Cooley's ([1902] 1964) notion of "looking-glass self". The term refers to "how people make choices about their appearance and behaviour based in part on how they imagine others see them: through social interaction we learn to see ourselves reflected in others' perceptions of society" (Martey and Consalvo, p. 167). Cooley ([1902]1964) writes:

"[I]n imagination we perceive in another's mind some thought of our appearance, manners, aims, deeds, character, friends, and so on, and are variously affected by it" (p.184).... "A sensitive man, in the presence of an impressive personality, tends to become, for the time, his interpretation of what the other thinks he is" (p.206).

Cooley's notion of "looking-glass self" can be analyzed to the participants of the reality programs, who receive

evaluations from the judges' panel immediately after their performance and realize their "self". On the basis of the judgment, the audiences are expected to vote to their best performer. According to Cooley ([1902]1964), people feel ashamed in the presence of a big personality or person with authority (p. 184) but in *Indian Idol-3*, the participants with strong support from ethnic communities and receiving high number of SMS votes, neither they felt ashamed nor interpreted themselves according to the judges' point of view. Rather, they appeared on the stage with ethnic attire and sang songs in regional languages to get more supports from the SMS campaigners (Punathambekar, 2010b), who hardly bothered about quality of performance of their ethnic idol, but dedicated to any-how-win mission, and the judges had no control over results defined by the SMS votes. Here, Cooley's ([1902]1964) argument — our self is developed through the judgments of others — reflects very significantly in the behaviours of *Indian Idol-3* participants.

However, the "looking-glass self" effect was evidently reflected on the audiences, who were from the same ethnic community or from the same region or shared the same socio-cultural background of the contestants. As Prashant entered in the new episodes of *Indian Idol-3* with higher votes, the ethnic audiences formulated their perceptions of identity empowered and the "Save Prashant" SMS campaign was strengthened further.

Since the marginalized Nepalese community have been largely misrepresented and stereotyped as *Gurkhas* (means, just fit in security works) by Indian media and mainstream groups for decades and even today, the *Indian Idol-3* was an opportunity to the people of Nepalese origin across India to prove their talents in different fields and remove the stereotypical tag of *Chowkidar* (watchman). For instance, immediately after Prashant's victory as *Indian Idol-2007*, a New Delhi-based radio jockey made a racist comment calling him a *Chowkidar* that sparked riots in cities and towns in West Bengal of India (Punathambekar, 2010a, p. 141). However, as announced in the finale event by the Sony Television, 70 million SMS votes in total were cast, as never before, and Prashant won the title of the contest with a huge difference than his competitor Amit Paul.

According to Cooley ([1902]1964), the feeling of "self" is influenced by history, national development, classes and other factors. He ([1902]1964) says, "It is notable that the national self, indeed any group self, can be felt

only in relation to a larger society, just as the individual self is felt only in relation to other individuals" (p. 210). People of northern part of West Bengal were demanding *Gorkhaland*, a separate state of ethnic Nepalese in India for 50 years or more, which is popularly known as Gorkhaland movement. The participation of Tamang in *Indian Idol-3* was an opportunity to galvanize ethnic identity of Nepali speaking community in West Bengal and revive the demands of autonomous *Gorkhaland* again. Some political leaders of the movement "launched fundraising effort to finance a mass SMS campaign for Tamang as a step toward renewing the struggle for *Gorkhaland*" (Punathambekar, 2010b, p. 242).

After the success of Prashant as *Indian Idol-3*, all those fans clubs were merged into a new political party called the *Gorkha Janmukti Morcha* (Punathambekar, 2010b, p.242). As a consequence, the Gorkhaland movement revived in 2008 and successfully bargained *Gorkhaland* Territorial Administration as a semi-autonomous state on July 18, 2011 (Tamang, 2011). However, as Horkheimer (1982) stated, the ethnic Nepalese in India were given "limited freedom... on the illusory form of perfect freedom and autonomy" (p. 241) and the real democracy and autonomy, as argued by Peterson (1997), may require more endeavors and negotiations.

The event of *Indian Idol-3* can be interpreted from the perspective of critical theory. According to Horkheimer (1982), critical theory is aimed at decreasing domination and increasing freedom in all forms. The issues of identity and mainstreaming of ethnic Nepalese in India were mounting up as a huge disappointment for decades, and the *Indian Idol-3* became a starting point to seek ethnic and regional freedom "to liberate ... from the circumstances that enslave them" (Horkheimer, 1982, p. 244). The "reality television phenomenon had drawn the attention of millions across India to the complex socio-cultural and political struggles in a region that continued to be neglected and often misrepresented by mainstream institutions" (Punathambekar, 2010b, p. 242).

Conclusion

Many scholars agree that use of extreme emotion in reality-based television program is a key factor to determine authenticity (Aslama & Pantti, 2006; Bonsu, Darmody, & Parmentier, 2010; Hall, 2009; Hirdman, 2011; Palmer, 2010; Wood & Skeggs, 2010), and for Aslama and Pantti (2006) such emotional authenticity

is achieved through theatrical performance and confessional monologues, which can produce a feeling of *schadenfreude*, or in simple words, getting entertainment from the sufferings of others (Palmer, 2002; Wong, 2001).

This study, however, maintains that authenticity through "confessional monologues" as argued by Aslama and Pantti (2006) does not justify enough in case of the *Indian Idol-3*; rather, ethnicity of performers is found as an influential factor to the audience of similar socio-cultural background. As argued by Snyder (1993), when existing socio-political structures could not address the growing dissatisfaction of people, the reality television program *Indian Idol-3* might have transformed into ethnic and political identity issue, and authenticity was achieved through interactivity of massively mobilized audiences. In such circumstance, orchestrated, manufactured and dramatized content presented in the reality television shows may not be influential to favor the best quality performers, but the favored ethnic idol can be rewarded. In the same way, reality television is not always the platform to identify "personal self" as argued by Palmer (2010) and Wood and Skeggs (2010), but it is also the opportunity to identify the "social self" as stated by Cooley ([1902] 1964).

Similarly, this study also argues that Cooley's ([1902] 1964) of "looking-glass self" makes trivial effect on the performers of *Indian Idol-3*, but it is found more influential to the social or national self. Cooley ([1902] 1964) writes, "the national self ... can be felt only in relation to a larger society, just as the individual self is felt only in relation to other individuals" (p. 210). The success of contestant Prashant of the *Indian Idol-3* in newer episodes developed into energy to the ethnic audiences within India and beyond, and the community capitalized the opportunity to bring their identity in limelight through the avatar of their ethnic idol.

Based on the critical observation of the *Indian Idol-3*, this study finds that Illouz's (2007) notion of "emotional capitalism" has been transformed into ethnic and political branding, but makes a different opinion than Holmes' (2004) argument that star is a product of capitalism (pp. 155-156) since the star is determined by interactivity of mass audiences. In conclusion, emotional appeals on the stage of reality television may not have universal application at all times to be a key factor of determining authenticity; it

may depend upon the socio-cultural environment of the audiences and the performers.

This study is expected to contribute on the concept of authenticity of reality television shows from the perspective of ethnic audiences regardless of confessional monolog and use of extreme emotions. Since this study is based on the two reality television programs broadcast through Indian televisions, the findings cannot be generalized in all contexts. Further study can be made on the influence of audiences with different socio-cultural backgrounds, for whom, identity and mainstreaming issues are more important than entertainment.

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RTI Audit in Nepal

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Abstract

The study portrays the status of the implementation and use of RTI Act in the central governmental bodies, ministries and it is measured by conducting 'RTI Audit.' RTI Audit is a method of measurement of the status of the implementation and use of RTI law. Both the Primary and Secondary Data Collection Method has been adopted with the set of questionnaire is being distributed to respondents and analyzed the information received. All ministries are asked to assess the implementation of RTI Act. This study justifies the rationale of the use of RTI in the central level. The study finding reflects that these central bodies of Nepal government are doing in a certain way for the enforcement of RTI Act. Although, the implementation and promotion of RTI Act is not satisfactory, some of the ministries are getting 100 marks in the ranking. The study still finds the need to do a lot in various areas from the appointment of information officers to the operation of trainings and other capacity building activities to increase their performances.

Keywords: RTI Audit, Judiciary, Implementation, RTI Act, Ministry, Information Commission

Background of RTI in Nepal ¹

A popular government without popular information, or the means of acquiring it, is but a prologue to farce or tragedy or perhaps both. Knowledge will forever govern ignorance: and a people who mean to be their own governors, must arm themselves with the power which knowledge gives.

— James Madison, 4th President of the United States of America. (Rodrigues, 2008)

Right to Information (RTI), also called as freedom of Information (FOI), is regarded as a fundamental human right of the people in modern world. Acknowledging the importance of information, the United Nations, in its very first General Assembly in 1946, adopted a resolution [59.1] stating that "freedom of information is a fundamental human right and ... the touch-stone of all the freedoms to which the United Nations is consecrated." (Mendel, 2005:1)

United Nations in 1948 adopted a very important declaration also known as UDHR, 1948 reads in its article 19 for freedom of speech and right to information as "Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive

and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers."

Right to information underlines the fact that all citizens have the right of access to the public information kept by government except prohibited by the law of nation. So, this right is regarded as one of the important fundamental rights of people.

The right to information is also a foundational stone to build a democratic country. The use of RTI by people is a key tool to measure the accountability of the government. The effective implementation of this law helps to establish a just Society. The RTI is regarded as a foundation for the good governance and transparency around the world.

In Nepalese Context

Nepal adopted Right to Information Act in July 2007. Nepal is the third in South Asia to adopt this law after India and Pakistan (*Towards Open Government in Nepal*, 2011:2).

Pakistan issued this law in 2002 and India in 2005. Nepal is, however, the first country in the region to have formal constitutional recognition of the right to information, as this right was explicitly guaranteed in Article 16 of the 1990 Constitution. The Interim Constitution also guaranteed RTI in its Article 27. The present *Constitution of Nepal*, 2015 also has provided

¹ This study has taken inputs from *An Audit Report on Right to Information, 2016* published by the National Information Commission (NIC). The ex-secretaries of the Nepal Government collected the data for this study.

this right in the fundamental rights in its article 27. The 1990 Constitution set the ground for RTI Act. The Federation of Nepalese Journalists (FNJ) lobbied for RTI law (*Towards Open Government in Nepal*, 2011:4), considering it as an important asset for journalists to get information on all public bodies and checks wrong-doings of public authorities, if any.

The RTI campaign took momentum especially after the restoration of parliament, following the successful popular movement also known as April Uprising in 2006. A High-Level Media Commission formed by the government submitted a report in September 2006, recommending the adoption of a right to information law to give effect to the constitutionally protected right.

A group of civil society organizations, including Freedom Forum (an organization working for the freedom of expression and media rights), Federation of Nepalese Journalists (an umbrella organization of Nepalese journalists) and Nepal Press Institute (an NGO working for the promotion of media rights) were involved in a nation-wide advocacy campaign to spread awareness on RTI (Pathak, 2015:45).

In September 2007, the government finally formed a task-force to draft a Bill on right to information for the second time. The seven-member taskforce was headed by Kashi Raj Dahal, former Secretary of the Judicial Council, while the members of the task-force were mostly career journalists and representatives of media unions and consisted of both government and non-government members.

The parliament endorsed the RTI draft bill with some amendments on 21 July 2007 and the Act came into force on 20 August 2007.

The Legal Status of RTI in Nepal

In regard to the right to information, the *Constitution of the Kingdom of Nepal, 1990 (2047 BS)* opened the door for the first time by including the right in the list of the fundamental rights in Article 16.

The *Interim Constitution of Nepal, 2007 (2063 BS)* in its article 27 specifies that 'every citizen shall have the right to demand or obtain information on any matters of his/her own or public concerns'.

Likewise the present *Constitution of Nepal, 2015 (2072 BS)* also has guaranteed the right to information in its Article 27 as:

Every citizen shall have the right to demand or obtain information on any matters of concern to him

or herself or to the public. Provided that nothing in this article shall be deemed to compel any person to provide information on any matter about which confidentiality is to be maintained according to the law.

Objectives

The main objective of this study is to know the situation of the implementation of RTI law in Nepal by applying the RTI Audit method. It is primarily focused on examining the state of RTI in the ministries of Nepal.²

Methodology

The study has been conducted with a set of close-ended questionnaire of 20 questions. The approach is more quantitative than qualitative. Every question is allocated in three different marks like 0, 2.5 and 5 to the 31 information officers of the ministries of Nepal Government. The criteria prepared for this survey, included appointment of information officer, establishment of information section in the ministry, the record keeping system of information sought, providing information in a time provisioned by law, the condition of the maximum disclosure, understanding of information by officer, publication of public information and so on. Those questionnaires were asked to the information officer of the ministries and on the basis of the answers they provided, the individual ministry obtained marks. Then these numbers were analyzed out of 100 full marks.

The situation of the use and implementation of the RTI law by the ministries under question was analyzed using qualitative approach.

Rationale

Nepal issued RTI Act 10 years back, but the implementation is not satisfactory as the civil society, RTI activists and people often complain. The government bodies are unwilling to disseminate and update information. Maximum disclosure as the Act says to update it every three months, is also not maintained. In such situation, the judicial body to perform the information-providing-duty, National Information Commission (NIC) has managed to conduct this audit. The study simply depicts a preliminary picture of the secretariat of Nepal government for the properly enforcement of this law in Nepal.

² For the full list of the ministries included in this study, see: Appendix section at the end of article.

What Is Audit?

Audit, in general, is the process of evaluation, inspection or supervision of accomplished tasks. It is performed at both governmental and non-governmental sectors. Most often audit of budget or government programs or projects is performed. The Office of Auditor General carries out the audit of budget or financial transactions, whereas the audit of other programs or projects is carried out by the concerning head office or even the National Planning Commission (NPC).

In latter days, such audits are also being carried out by some social or non-governmental organizations. These organizations get the actions and operations of the government offices approved by the people involved, or the consumers, or via public hearings amidst people's participation. This is customarily called social audit these days. On the other hand, there are also audits of proposed or running programs or budgets; like, gender-related budget, poor-centric budget or environment-friendly budget or programs etc.

RTI Audit in Nepal

The latest addition of audit is the RTI Audit. It is related to the Right to Information Act and can be performed on various subjects and fields and its objective is focused on the use of this act. This Act is, indeed, a tool to establish good governance in the country. As the right to information is being practiced around the world as a powerful weapon to make the rulers responsible towards the people and make things transparent to the society by preventing irregularities, controlling corruption and revealing inappropriate actions and malpractices, the RTI Audit is the emerging concept to ensure the proper and effective use of RTI Act. RTI audit has been conducted in Nepal for the first time by National Information Commission (NIC) in 2016 (*An Audit Report on RTI*, 2016).

The form of RTI Audit, also called RTI budget, practiced recently in the world, is generally based on the issues. This type of audit focused on the mode of use of the Right to Information Act or the activeness of the implementation of this law finds out the information seekers and their numbers. It searches and points out how the demands for the right to information are progressing and how often people do use this right and have been able to get the information. The demand thus made can also be classified at a micro-level. Generally, the number of information-seekers

according to their gender, caste and occupation is sought.

Secondly, RTI audit is practiced mainly for the purpose of the use of the Right to Information Act. The purpose of the use of this law is the main subject of search under this audit. The enquiry as to whether somebody used the right to information for himself for his or her professional purpose or for the purpose of public benefit and against corruption is the subject of investigation here. Under this, the purpose and objective of the use of Right to Information (RTI) Act is sought.

Similarly, the third type of practice of audit that is prevalent is the investigation of coverage and propagation of news related to this. Extensive searches are made to find whether media have taken proactive approaches and given more coverage to news emphasizing the importance and need of the use of right to information or just event-based news. It is also examined whether media have themselves used this act to extract information or not to produce news.

On the other hand, content analysis can also be done to assess how much space and priorities have been given by media to the news and other contents related to the right to information issues.

The comparative survey of law regarding right to information done by UNESCO in 2003 can be taken as an example of international practice of RTI audit (*An Audit Report on RTI*, 2016). In this survey, UNESCO conducted a comparative study of laws and constitutions prevalent in the world, regarding the freedom of information. This survey by Toby Mendel, a Canadian citizen and an expert on right to information laws, has made a comparative study regarding citizen's access to right to information, legal provision about the duty to publish it, provision of anomalies used in the right to information law and the inspection of losses due to them, provision of right to appeal and extension of citizen's role in the scope of use and formulation of right to information laws.

It has also examined the democratic nature of the prevalent laws relating to right to information and presented suggestions on making the forthcoming laws more public oriented. This study can be called an audit on the right to information (RTI) laws.

The worldwide survey of RTI laws was done by Center for Law and Democracy based in Canada (*An Audit Report on RTI*, 2016). Another effort by a non-governmental organization, Access Info, can be taken

as the latest example of audit on right to information. This survey is centered on the right to information law and its use in the 103 countries of the world where there are separate right to information laws. This also has made a comparative study of the laws using similar methods and parameters of audit. It has also measured the state of implementation of the right to information laws in those countries for which 61 different indicators are prepared and measured under seven different criteria. The criteria are:

- Citizen's access to information,
- Scope of RTI law
- The process of demand from the demander's side for the demand of information,
- Anomaly and its coverage and the conditions when information may not be provided,
- Appeal
- Method of providing information
- Safety of the informant and
- The means of extension required for citizens' right to information.

A total of 150 points is allotted under these criteria. Countries are listed from 1 to 103 according to the points they have received. In the list, Nepal has been ranked 23rd among 103 nations and India is in the third position. Out of 150, 100 countries have received more than 100 points (*An Audit Report on RTI*, 2016).

Findings

Three ministries, viz. the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Peace & Reconstruction and the Ministry of Forests & Soil Conservation among the 31 ministries of the Nepal Government obtained the highest 100 full marks. They secured the 100 per cent result as they responded.

The Ministry of Supply only secured 35 marks in the RTI survey. A total of ten ministries got 91 to 100 marks and nine ministries got 81 to 90 marks. Likewise, six ministries got 71 to 80 marks in this research.

Marks	Frequency	Remarks
100	3	Ministry of Education Ministry of Peace & Reconstruction Ministry of Forests & Soil Conservation
91 to 99	10	
81 to 90	9	
71 to 80	6	
<71	3	Lowest = 35 (Ministry of Supply)

Table 1: Marks obtained by ministries

The result shows that the ministries have done at least basic tasks for the RTI implementation as the law has

directed to do. But still, there are so many complaints against these offices regarding the dissemination of information and they also have not monitored to their line offices about the condition of the use and implementation of RTI. Some ministries, those are directly connected to the people for the various services have obtained poor marks the need to be developed

The ministries getting 100 marks are even in poor condition for proactive disclosure as they are making public their information only through website, instead of national-level newspapers. Some ministries have not established information section even.

Recommendations

As much is required to be done by the ministries pursuant to the RTI Act and laws, the study has found rooms for improvements for all the ministries as such. These recommendations are to ensure the easy access of information, usually to the public in general. Based on this study of the 31 ministries of Nepal, the following recommendations are made:

- Appoint information officer, make him or her easily available and establish information section in every state agency.
- Appraise information officer on the basis of their performance.
- Maintain proactive disclosure as the Act says and make public through the national media as much as possible.
- Maintain the uniformity of website of the central level government offices like ministries, departments etc.
- Conduct public hearing periodically under the monitoring of NIC.
- Organize the training, discussion and interaction among the information officers and all staffs periodically in the presence of RTI experts and NIC officials.
- Include RTI in the social audit that is being done by various state agencies.
- Make NIC more active, autonomous, independent and able for the fostering of RTI Act in Nepal.
- Maintain updating and digital record of public information to make easy to disseminate it as sought.
- Conduct RTI audit periodically to measure the status of the implementation of RTI especially in the government agencies.

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Appendix

List of Ministries included in the Study

1. Office of the Prime Minister and Council of Ministers
2. Ministry of Finance
3. Ministry of Supply
4. Ministry of Industry
5. Ministry of Energy
6. Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs
7. Ministry of Agriculture Development
8. Ministry of Water Supply and Sanitary
9. Ministry of Home Affairs
10. Ministry of Population and Environment
11. Ministry of Foreign Affairs
12. Ministry of Livestock Development
13. Ministry of Land Reform and Management
14. Ministry of Physical Infrastructure and Transport
15. Ministry of Women, Children and Social Welfare
16. Ministry of Youth and Sports
17. Ministry of Defense
18. Ministry of Forests and Soil Conservation
19. Ministry of Commerce
20. Ministry of Science and Technology
21. Ministry of Cooperatives and Poverty Alleviation
22. Ministry of Urban Development
23. Ministry of General Administration
24. Ministry of Irrigation
25. Ministry of Information and Communication
26. Ministry of Federal Affairs and Local Development
27. Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation
28. Ministry of Health and Population
29. Ministry of Peace and Reconstruction
30. Ministry of Education
31. Ministry of Labor and Employment

Ray of Radio: Radio Nepal's Coverage of 2015 Earthquake

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Abstract

Radio broadcasting has been accepted as a panacea in all phases of disaster such as mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery and to save lives of people in times of disasters. Radio broadcasting is even more effective in case of earthquake as there will be no or little chance to watch television, read newspapers, and being online due to massive damages in infrastructure and power-cut. But the effectiveness of radio broadcasting in times of disaster largely depends on the proper application of the concept, principles, knowledge and skills of emergency radio broadcasting. This study tries to measure the effectiveness of Radio Nepal, the only national radio broadcasting of the country in covering April 2015 Gorkha Earthquake, also called April Earthquake. The paper also analyses the coverage of mega natural disasters by various radio stations in the world. The paper tries to identify the roles Radio Nepal played during April Earthquake and reveals the lessons learned from the coverage.

Keywords: natural disasters, hazards April earthquake, media coverage, radio broadcasting, reconstruction and rehabilitation, recovery, rescue and relief, emergency radio broadcasting, radio program formats

Usually disaster is related to any "rapid, instantaneous or profound impact of the natural environment upon the socio-economic system" (Alexander, 1993:4). The idea of "great damage and loss of life" as Oxford English Dictionary defines natural disaster or "catastrophic consequence" in terms of life as dictionary.com defines it is worth considering here. Therefore, such catastrophic events that occur in rather unpopulated areas are not considered disaster, as it cannot cause loss of lives and properties.

Scholars suggest using the term 'natural hazards' instead of 'natural disaster'. Leoni et al. (2011) argues "There is nothing 'natural' about a disaster. Nature provides the hazards — earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, floods and so on — but humans help create the disaster. We cannot prevent a volcanic eruption, but we can prevent it from becoming a disaster."

Natural disaster of various forms is one of the major causes of loss of lives and property in the world annually. Natural disaster claims 68 thousand lives and affects 218 million people per annum (*The Human Cost of Natural Disaster 2015: A Global Perspective*, 2015:7). According to United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UNISDR), between 2005- 2015 over 700 thousand people lost their lives, over 1.4 million were injured and approximately 23 million people were

made homeless as a result of disasters. In the context of Nepal too, natural disaster is one of the major causes of loss of lives and properties. "During the last 45 years, from 1971 to 2015, different kinds of natural disaster, including epidemic, took the lives of 40,264 people, injured 78,387 and affected 59,32,012 people" (*Disaster Risk Reduction in Nepal*, 2016:3).

In 2015 alone, almost 9 thousand people lost their lives to April Earthquake, the first major shock of which came 11:56 a.m. on 25th April that year.

April Earthquake that struck the country with the magnitude of 7.6 Richter scale magnitude on 25th of April, 2015 and 7.3 Richter scale aftershocks on 12th of May, 2015 took the lives of 8,896 people and injured seriously 22,303 people. (*Nepal Disaster Report 2015*, 2015:14)

The earthquake destroyed 6,04,930 houses completely and 2, 88,856 houses partially. It is estimated that the total value of disaster effects (damages and losses) caused by the earthquakes is NPR 706 billion or its equivalent of US\$ 7 billion. (PDNA, 2015)

Most natural disasters are always inevitable. Though they cannot be prevented, their impacts can be mitigated through careful prediction with the help of advanced technology and intensive research. But disasters as earthquake cannot be accurately predicted

except some exceptional case¹ in the past. So it needs more attention and serious efforts to mitigate risk and minimize casualties as possible by practicing early preparedness and disaster-management approach and different risk reduction measures. In Nepal too, these have been in practice to some extent with the formulation of National Strategy for Disaster Risk Management (NSDRM) in 2009 and Nepal Risk Reduction Consortium formed by the Government of Nepal (*Nepal Disaster Report*, 2013).

In all phases of disaster management and risk reduction efforts, the role of media is very vital. Furthermore, radio broadcasting at times of disaster has been proven very effective to minimize severity of disaster and reduce casualties (Ndolu, 2013).

Nepalese media too did their best during April 2015 Gorkha Earthquake. It was completely a new experience for modern Nepalese media to cover such a devastating earthquake — the largest to hit Nepal almost after 80 years since the Nepal-Bihar earthquake 1934 (*Nepal Disaster Report 2015*).

FM radio stations all over Nepal could not broadcast immediately after the earthquake, especially due to poor infrastructure, lack of earthquake-protected studios and preparedness. Despite all these, they did whatever they could with the limited resources and expertise. As a national broadcaster with a history of 67 years covering 86% of total population, Radio Nepal used its full strengths and started live-broadcasting as emergency radio broadcasting service right after the first powerful tremor that jolted 39 districts severely affecting 14 districts². Radio Nepal ended its emergency broadcasting at 10th day and went on regular schedule thereafter.

Objectives

The overall objective of this study is to assess Radio Nepal's coverage of April Earthquake and the role it played through emergency broadcasting, while its specific objectives are as follows:

- To identify the roles played by Radio Nepal in times of disaster
- To measure the effectiveness of the coverage

¹ The 7.3 M_w earthquake in Haicheng of China in 1975 was accurately predicted by Haicheng Earthquake Study Delegation sent from USA, which saved the lives of many, as some evacuation orders were given just before the earthquake occurred.

² Declared by the Government of Nepal as the most affected districts were Gorkha, Dhading, Rasuwa, Nuwakot, Kathmandu, Lalitpur, Bhaktapur, Kavrepalanchowk, Sindhupalchowk, Dolakha, Sindhuli, Makawanpur, Ramechhap and Okhaldhunga.

Method

Both qualitative and quantitative research methods have been applied for the purpose study. Content analysis has been done as a tool to identify the roles Radio Nepal played during and after the April 2015 earthquake. As a part of content analysis, archived audio files of live broadcast during the emergency broadcasting were examined. To measure the effectiveness of the coverage, questionnaire method was adopted in which, a questionnaire set was distributed to 50 listeners of the affected areas.

Also to find out the lessons learnt, key-informant interviews (KIIs) and focused-group discussions (FGDs) were carried out among editors, reporters, news and program producers and presenters involved in emergency broadcasting during April Earthquake. One FGD was conducted in Radio Nepal.

The Role of Media in Times of Disaster

The role of media has been recognized vital in all the phases of any natural disaster — prevention, preparedness, response and recovery also known as PPRR. This PPRR model is widely used worldwide in all efforts and plans related to disaster management and risk reduction after it was first developed in USA in 1978. Cronstedt (2002) has also questioned the model as an outdated one. Be it with the PPRR model or C. Kelly's model³, the role of media is in all efforts of disaster management is not neglected.

Media play a vital role in educating the public about disasters, warning of hazards, gathering and transmitting information about affected areas, alerting government officials, relief organizations, and the public to specific needs, and facilitating discussions about disaster preparedness and response (Poudel et al., 2015). Although the role of media is equally important in all phases of disaster management, these roles can be varied as per the different stages of disaster. Before disaster, media play the role of awareness creator and informer about potential disaster; during disaster, broadcast media play the role to save lives of people through lifeline communication

³ Charles Kelly, a disaster-management consultant, proposed a new disaster management model at *Disaster Management: Crisis and Opportunity: Hazard Management and Disaster Preparedness in Australasia and the Pacific Region Conference*, 1-4 November 1998 at Queensland, Australia. Instead of focusing on disaster stages, this model emphasizes on non-linear nature of disaster, elaborating the relationship between inputs and the impacts. The main characteristic of this model is its ability to learn from actual disasters.

and life-saving broadcasting; after disaster, media play the role on relief efforts, recovery of victims, rehabilitation and reconstruction (Bista, 2015).

The *World Conference on Disaster Reduction* held in Kobe, Japan from 18-22 January 2005 adopted the *Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015*, in which the use of media had been recognized as very effective to raise public awareness in order to stimulate a culture of disaster-resilience and strong community involvement in sustained public education campaigns and public consultations at all levels of society (p. 10).

Joseph Scanlon's article titled *Research about the Mass Media and Disaster: Never (Well Hardly Ever) the Twain Shall Meet* (2007) finds the role of mass media very effective in warnings and rumor control (p. 77). Media coverage of disaster can undoubtedly contribute to the disaster risk reduction efforts and surely minimize the severe consequences of disaster, if the coverage is effective. But, at the same time, there can be reverse consequence, if media is not handled properly in times of disaster. Japanese media coverage of The Great East Japan Earthquake⁴ was regarded more emotional than objective (Uchida et. al., 2015).

Journalists involved in covering The Great East Japan Earthquake in 2011 found it extremely difficult to report the events as there was no guarantee of the objectivity of the news and it was also difficult to control the negative emotions while writing and reporting the disaster. During this tragedy, journalists had to cover three disaster events simultaneously — an earthquake (plus its subsequent aftershocks), a tsunami and a nuclear accident. It was the first time for Japanese journalists to cover a nuclear accident, in which even science journalists were not able to communicate effectively to the audience. They resorted to emotional coverage of the disaster also owing to their socio-cultural factors (Uchida et. al., 2015).

Media Coverage of Some Major Natural Disasters in the World

As Japan is one of the most disaster-hit countries in the world especially in terms of earthquake and tsunami, Japanese media has therefore experienced it much in comparison to the media of other countries. The Great

East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami of 2011, already discussed in above section, is one of the significant cases of NHK coverage.

As the sole public broadcaster of Japan where earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, typhoons and other natural disasters are all too common, NHK is expected to play two-fold roles in emergency situation. In its usual capacity as a source of information, NHK reports on the damage caused and the state of the disaster-affected area. But it is also regarded as part of the infrastructure of disaster prevention and crisis management. (Takanobu, 2013:1)

NHK always has the first role in broadcasting earthquake-early-warning. During the Great East Japan Earthquake of 9.0 M_w magnitude at Tohoku region on 11 March 2011 at 2:46 p.m., NHK broadcasted the early warning in less than a minute. In less than another two minutes, NHK cut its regular programming and devoted all its capacity to disaster reporting and started broadcasting information about the tsunami and earthquake and continued its round-the-clock broadcast for the first week (Takanobu, 2013:1).

Takanobu (2013) has also compared the coverage of NHK with commercial broadcasters and found out the interesting outcomes. During the coverage of first 30 minutes after the earthquake, there were clear differences between NHK and other commercial broadcasters. NHK focused on the potential consequences of tsunami and started to make people aware by disseminating information about the sea-level to make them ready for possible evacuation. But other commercial broadcasters focused more on the dissemination the information of devastation and damages caused by earthquake. Another difference was that during the first 72 hours of the earthquake and tsunami, commercial broadcasters focused more only on the rescue operations and survivor stories, but NHK was prompt to cover the temporary evacuation centers and sufferers there and quickly started to broadcast about the basic supplies and assistance they needed at the moment.

Another case of the broadcast media coverage of a bigger natural disaster in the world is the 2004 Indian Ocean Earthquake and Tsunami⁵ that affected the coasts of several countries of South and South-East

⁴ Great East Japan Earthquake, also called Japan Earthquake and Tsunami 2011, is the most powerful earthquake ever recorded in Japan's history. On 11 March 2011 at 2:46 pm at Sendai, a 9.0 M_w earthquake triggering a devastating Tsunami killed around 4 thousand people with 7 thousand still missing.

⁵ On 26 December 2004 at 7:59 a.m. local time, an undersea-earthquake of 9.1 M_w struck off the coast of the Indonesian island of Sumatra triggering series of waves across Indian Ocean, devastating coastal areas as far as East Africa.

Asia. According to the US Geological Survey (USGS), 275,950 deaths were recorded in 14 countries⁶.

As the 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami also known as South Asian Tsunami, Indonesian Tsunami, the Boxing Day Tsunami or Tsunami Aceh is the biggest humanitarian crisis of its kind ever recorded in the world history, it spontaneously drew the attention of the world media.

CNN alone deployed over 80 anchors, correspondents, and producers to provide 24-hour coverage of relief efforts. ABC's *Nightline* dedicated three programs over four days entirely to coverage of the tsunami. Similarly, the tsunami dominated the front page of the *New York Times*, garnering over half of the articles on the front page in the week following the disaster. *Time*, *Newsweek*, *US News and World Report*, *the Economist*, and numerous other news magazines featured the tsunami and recovery efforts in multiple cover stories (Brown & Minty, 2006).

Tsunami dominated worldwide media attention for almost one full year, much longer than any natural disaster in modern history (Wynter, 2005). Media coverage of the Indian Ocean Earthquake and Tsunami in 2004 is credited as highly supportive to generate relief funds as well (Brown & Minty, 2006). The media coverage of Indian Ocean Tsunami is compared with CNN effects theory⁷ that each news of the tsunami in the evening TV network news increased the donations in the next day (Brown & Minty, 2006).

Radio Nepal's Coverage of April 2015 Earthquake

Radio Nepal covered no natural disaster or earthquake so intensively like the April 2015 Earthquake. Radio Nepal gave continuity to its emergency broadcasting for 10 days, which started just after eight minutes⁸ of the first main tremor measured 7.6 M_w on the Richter scale⁹.

⁶ The affected countries included India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Maldives, Myanmar, Somalia, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Bangladesh, South Africa, Madagascar, Kenya, Tanzania and the Seychelles.

⁷ CNN Effects Theory was proposed by Piers Robinson (2002) through his book *The CNN Effect: The Myth of News, Foreign Policy and Intervention*. It states that when news media broadcast emotional stories of human crisis, it provokes major responses by audiences and policy makers that immediately influence the public policy.

⁸ In the capacity of senior editor of Radio Nepal, I was editing news at the moment and preparing to present news on-air. I took microphone 8 minutes after the first quake with the first information of the disaster. I was accompanied later by a colleague and we both jointly handled the live-broadcast for several hours before others joined in as the aftershocks were on. Madhav Ghimire, editor of the News Department was also at the news-desk at that time.

⁹ International media preferred to mention 7.8 M_w on the Richter scale based on the measurement of international seismologists, but

Radio Nepal suspended all regular programs including the news bulletins and started live broadcasting round-the-clock. Only after the first 72 hours of the first major quake, Radio Nepal gradually restored regular news bulletins. During this time, all commercials were replaced by Public Service Announcements (PSAs) and notices issued by the government and other concerned authorities. Songs and entertainment programs were completely halted for 10 days. All sponsored programs were replaced by new radio programs that were intended to help the earthquake-affected people come out from the trauma, fear and chaotic situation. A radio program *Bhandai Sundai* (literally translated from Nepali language as telling and listening) was designed and introduced in a few days after the quake to help earthquake-affected listeners come out from the trauma by providing live counseling from experts in the studio. The radio program assisted by UNICEF later modified as field-based radio program to address the concerns of school children of the earthquake affected areas. For the field-based radio programs, various groups of singers, comedians and radio and television celebrities were taken to the schools, where children were compelled to study under the open sky to entertain them to remove fears from their minds.

The emergency broadcasting of Radio Nepal during April 2015 Earthquake was heavily dominated by live broadcasting. Apart from this, there were other radio programs as well of different modalities in order to address the varied needs of listeners such as informational, analytical, awareness and lifeline communication. In addition to the live broadcasting, there were other recorded programs as well such as phone-in, talk shows, panel discussion, field reporting, and radio interaction and so on.

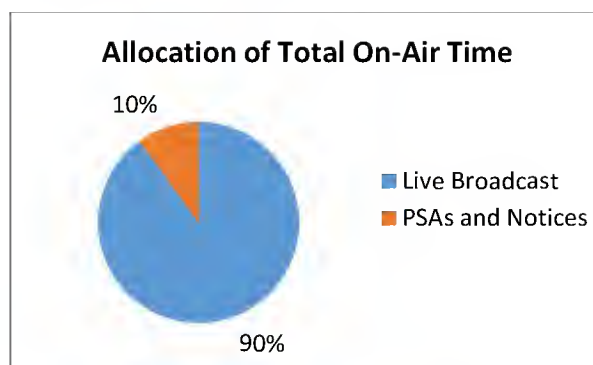


Figure 1: Total allocation of on-air time

During the first 72 hours of the earthquake, 90% of the total broadcasting time was occupied by the live

Nepal government mentioned it 7.6 M_w on the Richter scale based on the local measurement of Nepalese seismologists.

broadcasting from studio and the fields. In stark contrast to this, only 10% of the total time was occupied by PSAs that too was related to the aftermath of the earthquake. But, the live broadcasting time was gradually reduced, and regular news bulletins were restored along with additional new programs after the first 72 hours of critical time of the earthquake.

The Effectiveness of the Coverage

Radio broadcasting has been proven very effective in times of disaster. Radio is especially more effective during the times of disaster when watching television, being online and reading newspapers are rarely possible, due to sudden power cut-off and interruption of telephone and internet cables from devastation caused by natural hazards (Juric, 2006:43).

Radio Nepal became the only source of information for many during the April earthquake as watching television was not possible at the moment, when people were frightened to enter into buildings due to series of powerful tremors and power-cut off too. Many FM stations¹⁰ across the country could not broadcast due to lack of earthquake-resilient studios in comparison to the well-equipped and earthquake-friendly studio¹¹ of Radio Nepal. This is why many FM radio stations actually relayed Radio Nepal's emergency broadcasting instead of their own news and programs.

To measure the effectiveness of Radio Nepal's emergency broadcasting, a set of questionnaire was distributed to 50 people living at different places of affected districts. Based on their responses, Radio Nepal's coverage of April earthquake was highly effective. A total of 90% respondents listened to Radio Nepal during April 2015 Earthquake. They gave the reasons that Radio Nepal was trustworthy, authentic, credible, easy accessible and full of information, opinions and analysis at the moment.

More than 90% of people expressed views that Radio Nepal helped them tremendously by providing life-saving information, updating information about the damage and about casualties, relieving their stress and anxiety, and making them feel companionship in such a difficult time of earthquake.

People find emergency broadcasting of Radio Nepal very effective giving credit to regular news bulletins, special news bulletins, live broadcasting (live telephonic conversation to listeners and experts), PSA's and notices, psycho-social counseling radio-programs, radio talk-shows and discussions. They prefer live broadcasting the most.

Media	Frequency	Percentage
AM or Radio Nepal	42	84.00%
FM Radios	3	6.00%
TV	3	6.00%
Online	2	4.00%
Total	50	100.00%

Table 1: Most listened, watched or viewed media

The above table shows that 84% of respondents listened Radio Nepal during the April 2015 Earthquake.

Media	Frequency	Percentage
AM or Radio Nepal	48	96.00%
FM Radios	2	4.00%
TV	0	0.00%
Online	0	0.00%
Total	50	100.00%

Table 2: Main information source during electricity and phone cut-off

A total of 96 per cent of respondents found Radio Nepal as main source of information during the April 2015 Earthquake.

Media	Frequency	Percentage
AM or Radio Nepal	40	80.00%
FM Radios	4	8.00%
TV	2	4.00%
Online	4	8.00%
Total	50	100.00%

Table 3: Convenient media during April 2015 earthquake

AM radio or Radio Nepal was considered the most convenient media by 80 per cent of respondents during the April 2015 earthquake.

Type	Frequency	Remarks
Life-saving information	40	Each out of 50
Updates of damage and casualties	45	
Feeling of companionship	44	
Feeling of stress-free and anxiety-free	45	

Table 4: How Radio Nepal helped

A total of 80 per cent people responded that Radio Nepal provided life-saving information, 90 per cent respondents got updates on damages and casualties, 88 per cent of people felt companionship with Radio Nepal and 90 per cent people felt stress-free and

¹⁰ Altogether 740 FM radio stations have received license to operate FM Radio from Ministry of Information and Communication as of 31 July 2017.

¹¹ Built in an assistance of Japanese Government and is believed to resist earthquake measuring up to 8 M_w on the Richter scale.

anxiety-free through radio programs broadcast by Radio Nepal.

Program Type	Frequency	Percentage
Live broadcasting	24	48.00%
Regular news	14	28.00%
PSAs	7	14.00%
Counseling	5	10.00%
Total	50	100.00%

Table 5: Most effective program of Radio Nepal

The table 5 above shows that 48 per cent respondents found the live-broadcasting the most effective program, while 28 per cent of the respondents found regular news bulletin the most effective.

In the figure 1 below, the rating of informativeness, analysis, authenticity, credibility and influence have been presented. According to the graph, 80 per cent respondents found the contents of emergency broadcasting of Radio Nepal as highly informative.

Regarding the degree of analysis of the contents, 70 per cent of the total respondents say the content of Radio Nepal is highly analytical.

On the degree of the authenticity of the media contents, 80 per cent of the respondents considered the contents of Radio Nepal as highly authentic.

Regarding the degree of the credibility of the media contents, 84 per cent of respondents find the contents of emergency broadcasting during April 2015 Earthquake as highly credible.

On the degree of influence on decision-making regarding disaster behaviour after listening to Radio Nepal, 60 per cent of respondents say that the emergency broadcasting of Radio Nepal during the

April 2015 Earthquake helped change their disaster behaviours.

The emergency broadcasting of Radio Nepal in times of April 2015 Earthquake was not only looked effective from people's point of view but also from government and intellectual circles point of view.

Professor Rama Krishna Regmee realized the need of the state-owned national radio broadcasting even more in times of disaster like earthquake (personal conversation, 5 May 2015). He accepted this reality after being impressed by the very effective coverage of April 2015 Earthquake by Radio Nepal.

The Role of Radio Nepal Broadcasting in times of April 2015 Earthquake

Radio Nepal played significant roles during April 2015 Earthquake. The role Radio Nepal played during the period was multi-facet. After an analysis of the archived audio-contents broadcasted before, during and after April Earthquake, some remarkable roles of Radio Nepal have been identified in the following ways:

1. Life Saving Radio Broadcasting

It has already been proven that radio broadcasting during emergency can save lives of people. Many radio stations in the world have practiced it in the past and contributed to save many lives. In some cases, a separate radio station of temporary nature has been established as soon as the natural hazard starts, and this facilitate two-way communication to the people of affected areas to save the lives of those vulnerable. In such case, a team of radio technicians and broadcasters are already set on stand-by as part of Emergency

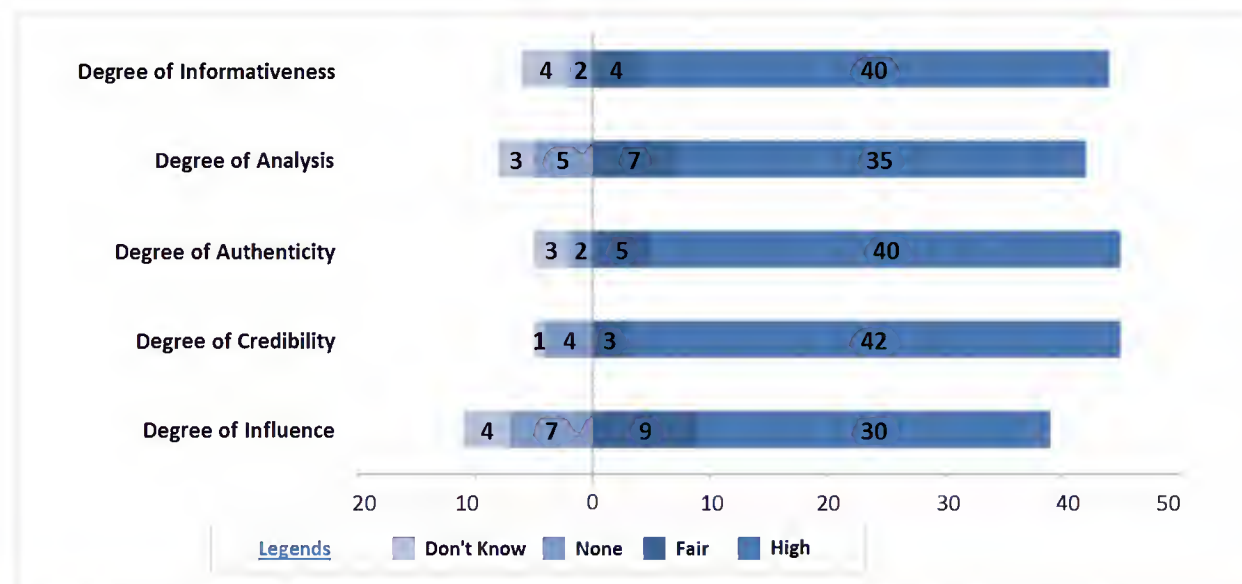


Figure 2: Graphical representation of degree of informativeness, analysis, authenticity, credibility and influence

Management efforts of the government. During Tacloban typhoon in Philippines in 2007, First Response Radio (FRR), an international non-profit network of radio technicians licensed by the Philippines government's Nation Telecommunications Commission (NTC), started life-saving broadcasting within 72 hours of the storm.

The case of Radio Nepal is, however, something different than the case of FRR in Philippines as Radio Nepal used its regular central broadcasting to for life-saving broadcasting. In both cases, life-saving information was disseminated to the affected people to save their lives. Radio Nepal also practiced the concept of lifeline communication in the difficult situation of April 2015 earthquake.

2. Dissemination of wide range of information

Dissemination of wide range of information regarding the cause and consequences of April 2015 earthquake along with life-saving information to people is another role Radio Nepal played in the time of earthquake. The analysis of the contents Radio Nepal broadcasted during the time shows it dominantly informative. The varieties of information range from the science of earthquake to information on damage, casualties, and rescue and relief efforts.

3. Link people directly to experts and government

Radio Nepal played an important role to link people with government and experts of different field. Through live broadcasting, people had an opportunity to directly interact with government officials and ask questions to the experts. Radio Nepal, through its emergency broadcasting during April 2015 Earthquake, practiced bridging concept of journalism between government and people. People had an opportunity to directly ask questions to government officials, including ministers and political leaders about relief distribution and in other issues. At the same time, government officials got an opportunity to listen to the grievances of people and their needs, which obviously helped them to formulate victim-centric programs and activities in the affected areas.

4. Make people feel the presence of government

By giving time to the voice of government officials, Radio Nepal helped victims feel the presence of government in the times of disaster. Radio Nepal managed to broadcast live conversation with the then Minister of Communication and spokesperson of the government, Minendra Rijal, within one hour of the disaster. Minister Rijal, during the live broadcast of a

telephonic conversation with Radio Nepal, did not miss an opportunity to deliver the message on behalf of the government appealing people to stay calm and strong. Minister Rijal also made an appeal not to keep their mobile phones busy unnecessarily all the time as it might cause network failures for the most needed and hamper rescue efforts.

Radio Nepal also managed to quickly cover the first emergency meeting of the Council of Ministers held at the Ministry of Home Affairs led by the then Acting Prime-Minister Bamdev Gautam (Prime Minister Sushil Koirala was out of country on an official visit that time) in Singh Durbar after 2 hours of the first powerful quake.

During the entire period of emergency broadcasting for 10 days, Radio Nepal gave enough space for the government voice to assure people and make them feel that government was with them in that difficult situation.

5. Elimination of rumors

An analysis of the contents during the period shows that Radio Nepal also acted strongly to eliminate rumors created by some national and international media, quoting astrologers and citing immature research or study. People were in complete panic with such rumors as the possibility of next big quake. Radio Nepal's emergency broadcasting presented expert view on the matter and at one case also exposed a person held captive for spreading false rumors of another big earthquake with an intention to carry out looting during night.

6. Promoting citizen journalism

Radio Nepal played the role of promoting citizen journalism during April 2015 earthquake. As it was not possible for Radio Nepal to send reporters to all affected places and gather information from the field, it broadcasted the information sent by general public from the affected areas.

7. Help increase relief fund

Mass media do play the role of fund-raiser in times of disaster. Mass media are so powerful to encourage national and international industrialists, businesspersons, rich persons, charities and even individuals to donate fund to the victims through the presentation of victim's situation so vividly. On the other hand, by making a repeated call to help needy people, mass media can play significant role to collect fund and relief materials. Radio Nepal did the same and helped

increase the fund for Prime Minister Relief Fund established soon after the April 2015 earthquake. In addition to this, Radio Nepal also motivated givers by providing them an opportunity to announce their assistance through live broadcasting.

8. Normalizing the situation and bring back people into normal life

Radio Nepal played an important role to bring the situation to normalcy. The contents of the emergency broadcasting later days were focused to assure people to start routine life in a normal way. It gradually restored suspended programs to make people feel that the panic situation was over and everything was in normal condition. It started to focus more on addressing post disaster trauma of people by providing psycho-social counseling.

Lessons Learnt

FGD with broadcasters, editors, reporters, broadcast technicians and management staffs have revealed many lapses as lessons for the potential disaster situations in the future. As already mentioned, Radio Nepal's coverage of April Earthquake is the first intensive coverage of any natural disaster since its establishment in 1951: it was a new experience for all.

Participants of the FGDs have categorically pointed out the gap in their respective functional areas during the coverage of April 2015 Earthquake as below:

- Emergency broadcast plan and such team should be formed.
- All broadcaster, transmitter and equipments should be in good order.
- Audio archive system should be in place.
- Should be careful for not being manipulated by news source and experts, and not to serve the vested interest of any community, group, political party or any individual.

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Political Communication of PM and OPMCM of Nepal: An Analysis of Current Practices

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Abstract:

This article is the study of existing political communication practices of Prime Minister (PM) and Office of Prime Minister and Council of Ministers (OPMCM) of Nepal. Conclusions in the articles are based on, Key Informant Interviews (KII), and external and internal analyses of the communication practices of PM and OPMCM. The article examines strengths and weaknesses of political communication practice of the PM and OPMCM of Nepal and also identifies critical factors affecting such communications. It recommends for the improvements in the existing political communication practices of PM and OPMCM

Keywords: political communication, Prime Minister, Council of Ministers, Media

Introduction

The post of Prime Minister (PM) in Nepal was called by different names in the history. Since the inception of the Shah dynasty, the executive chiefs of the state were called *Mul-Kaji* who functioned as the PM. In 1806 AD, King Rana Bahadur Shah created the position of Mukhtiyar¹ as an executive chief. Bhimsen Thapa took on the title and is considered the first Prime Minister. He remained the central figure on the political stage for next thirty years (Whelpton, 2005). Since then Prime Minister in Nepal functioned as executive head of the state, but his role would largely depend upon the power of the King.

Headed by PM as the executive head, the Office of Prime Minister and Council of Ministers (OPMCM) is the supreme executive body of the state. The OPMCM has formulated rules allocating roles for itself and various ministries under *Government of Nepal (Allocation of Business) Rules, 2015*. It has categorized 36 functions for the OPMCM ranging from the leading the business of Council of Ministers to oversee ministries. External and internal public relations and communication of PM is one among the 36 functions of the OPMCM specified by the afore-mentioned rule. As an executive head, the PM serves the chief of the state administrator, executes political agendas in the capacity of political leader of particular party, elected from the parliament. The OPMCM coordinates and oversees the ministries and executes day-to-day

administrative functions in one hand. On the other, it also facilitates Prime Minister's official business which is largely attributed to his political functions. Besides its day-to-day administrative functions, critical decision-making by OPMCM revolves around PM, his advisors and ruling coalition partners.

The PM's political communication involves publicity, public relations, media relations and public outreach of PM himself and his government. The OPMCM also executes communication activities of the PM, which is more related to administrative functions. It also provides with information specified by the laws to the public voluntarily or based on demand through various means including mass media. It works as a regular system and is less affected by changes in the governments.

The PM enjoys privilege to make appointment of chief advisors, advisors, thematic experts and secretariat staffs for his personal secretariat. This group of political appointees is highly influential in PM's decision making process. One among the advisors is the Press Advisor. Based on the necessity, s/he has privilege to create other positions such as experts and coordinators.

PM's communication is backed by a media team, headed by the Press Advisor. The team includes communication experts and support staffs or permanent employees of the OPMCM. PM's media team is focused on image-building of the PM and his government through the dissemination of information. Media team does not have fixed positions; they might be created based on the interest of PM.

¹ Mukhtiyar is composed of two terms 'Mukhya' and 'Akhtiyar' which means Chief and Authority respectively.

Propaganda vs. Truth

Political communication has been acknowledged as an important medium for political parties, leaders and the government elsewhere in the world for their image projection. However, there have been several cases where PM, ministers and political leaders are mired in controversies and scandals, due to weaknesses in their communication system.

The OPMCM of Nepal does not have any written policy or strategy regarding PM's political communication. In the public sphere, quality, timeliness, responsiveness and delivery of communication messages have been questioned on several occasions in Nepal. The carelessly designed and delivered communication messages of the PM himself and the OPMCM have many times invited criticism and public discontent, which has several negative implications such as damage of image and reputation of the PM, adverse impact in people's poll and diplomatic relations. Further, it has also implication in government's stability and operation.

When Nepal was reeling under fuel crisis in Nepal due to limited fuel supply from India due to some political issues, which was termed as 'unofficial blockade of India' in 2015, PM by then, KP Sharma Oli faced an immense challenge to deliver trust to the people. As he tried to soothe public's grievances, he delivered public speech on number of occasions, where he claimed that he will bring an end to the existing LPG cylinders by setting up gas pipeline for domestic use.

"Once you switch it on, the gas begins to flow through the pipe... there will not be any tension if the gas cylinders are delivered at which shop... there will be meters on your wall and you can use it as much as you like," he said. Oli, who had made a commitment to end the power crisis within a year, claimed that he would end the fuel crisis very soon." (The Himalayan Times, 8 January 2016)

In reference to the same statement, an online portal Ujyalo Online (2016, 9 January) writes, "Nepal has not built gas pipeline to import it from India so far. Going far above than reality, assuring people to connect their homes with cooking gas pipe is false promise.

Even for emerging economy India which is also the monopoly in fuel supply to Nepal has been unable to do so. "[T]hat could spell doom for Prime Minister Narendra Modi's ambitious plan to ensure that piped cooking-gas reaches one crore households across the country by 2019, a fourfold increase from current level" (Chaudhary, 2015). In such condition, the

communication of executive head of the state was not too far from the possibility that it would not invite comments from general people and intellectual community.

In Nepal, public speech of the PM, members of Council of Ministers and high-level political leaders are often unscripted that sometimes leads to blunder. As Ujyalo Online correctly writes professionalism in information, communication and outreach in political institution and administrative institutions are poor that demands revamp in policy, strategy and action.

During his tenure of Deputy PM of Nepal in preceding government, Bamdev Gautam, was criticized after he crossed the road through a divider instead of a zebra-cross capital city Kathmandu. In his yet another mistake or slip, he was again mired in controversy for saying that 'rapes are common in transitional period'. Former PM Sushil Koirala's statement was also questionable when some diplomatically appalling photos were shared in Facebook during his US visit September 2015. His statement that Tanakpur belonged to India was countered with a lot of criticism. Then speaker Subash Nembang had to direct Koirala to immediately come to the parliament and clarify his recent controversial statement on Tanakpur (Setopati, 2014). Such incidents are not new in Nepal where the leaders in the government speak without taking care about the impact of their statements.

Pilla Norris (2005) in article *National Democratic Institute for International Affairs, Developments in Party Communication* correctly says that messages also play important role in political communication. He further notes generally, messages — particularly if they are in tension with existing attitudes and opinions — will be disregarded unless they are repeated, delivered by trusted leaders, and in a context in which there is a concrete opportunity to act.

The government of Nepal has set several mechanisms to make efficient information, communication and outreach. In democracy, right to information is considered as an important tool to promote transparency, accountability and good governance. Some legal and policy instruments to deal with people's demand of information, disclosure of information of public importance and improvement of information, communication and outreach of government agencies and civil servants are in place but their effectiveness is under question.

Political communication is one of the disciplines of political science and communication that includes planning, production and dissemination of message in the specific political setting to serve political interest of leaders or the organization. Political communication today appears to be more strategic than simply conveying the message to the public as it involves interest of number of parties in the process including government, political parties, media and audience.

For the political parties and the governments, political communication's core objective is to influence the public and gaining their trust by better planning of communication messages and mobilization of mass media. The effectiveness of the message is important for political institution to change or retain public opinion and build trust.

Referring to the inter-linkage between politics, communication, democracy, government and media, Deus (2011) mentions that there are several names for political communication such as mediocracy, government by spectacle, plebiscitary democracy, spectator democracy, telecracy, informational politics, public relations democracy, mobocracy, drama democracy, fan democracy, blockbuster democracy, media democracy, monitory democracy due to the lack of a fixed technical term for political communication in postmodern western societies is revealing.

Political communication is an exceptionally rich, complex, fluid and important sub-field among those that populate the overall field of communications studies. Scholarship has not always done suitable justice to those characteristics – either focusing discretely on isolated particulars or striving to comprehend it all-in-one grand-theoretical-go (Blumler, 2011). Robert E. Denton and Gary C. Woodward (1998), authors of *Political Communication in America*, also mention that influencing political environment is the intension of the political communication.

Political messages appear in several forms such as political speeches, print or electronic advertising, televised messages, debates or reach to the public as news content. *Encyclopedia of Political Communication* mentions the audiences for political communications are also central, necessitating concentration on citizen reactions to political messages, how the general public and voters in democratic systems respond to political

messages and the effects of all types of media and message types.

According to *Encyclopedia of Political Communication*, areas encompassed by the political communication are channels including interpersonal and public communication, radio, television, newspapers and the world wide web ensuring up-to-date and relevant content for teaching, research and learning; news media coverage and journalistic analysis of politics, political issues, political figures and political institutions to provide a fully rounded view of alternatives perspectives; and role of communication in governing, incorporating communication activities that influence the operation of executive, legislative, and judicial bodies, political parties, interest groups, political action committees and other participants in political processes to enhance understanding of the issues in a wide range of political groups.

The early writing of the Aristotle's *Rhetoric and Politics* (250 BC) hints that political communication had drawn interest of intellectuals though the term was not coined by then. Walter Lippmann's *Public Opinion* (1922) provided the first analogy to what later became the study of media effect (Vreese, 2006). Lippmann also analyzed contents of *The New York Times* about news coverage of Russian Revolution and also provided with speculation about how people form their intelligent opinion about political issue. During World War I and II political messages were characterized chiefly by propaganda.

Today due to the growth of mass media and increasing people's access to internet-based media platform, political leaders attraction tends to have shifted from traditional media to new media.

Political communication is an interdisciplinary combining the fields communication, political science, journalism, sociology, psychology, history, rhetoric and others. In showing the relation and impact between political messages, media and opinion formation, various theoretical approaches such as direct and limited effects theories, agenda-setting, sociological theories, and framing have been developed.

Communication Functions of Public Relations

Media was the chief instrument for the king, government and political leaders to spread their message and win the public trust. Development of Nepali media has been influenced by political situation

of the country in the different stages of political history and ruling approaches.

After the restoration of democracy in 1990, new constitution was promulgated in Nepal that created environment of security to the press. The democracy also ended the monopoly of the government in the broadcasting media allowing private sector to operate radio and television. Rapid growth of mass communication means provided opportunity of media selection for message sender and audience both. As Dahal (2002) rightly mentions 'the media is a powerful means for state authorities, political parties and leaders to exhort the citizens to actively support their policies. He further notes that such policies are derived from a set of political beliefs, strong ideas and certain doctrinal systems called ideologies; media in Nepal reflect every political point of view and determine which events are newsworthy on a left-center-right horizontal ideological sphere, rather than on a vertical future-past dividing line.

There was a growth of new profession known as public relations in twentieth century, through which political messages were passed effectively. Today, the members of this profession, incorporating advertising and marketing as well, stand between the politician and the media, profiting from the relationship of mutual interdependence which exists between the two. Corporate public relations, from which the professional political communicator emerged, first developed in the US at the turn of the century, as big US companies encountered for the first time the often conflicting demands of commercial success and public opinion (McNair, 1995).

Ivy Lee, considered pioneer of public relations had set up the first consultancy in 1904. He provided consultancy service to the coal and rail industries. The politicians in the US also adopted techniques of public relations for political purpose. One among the leaders to recognize the power of public relations was President Woodrow Wilson who in 1917 established a federal committee on public information to manage public opinion about the First World War. Similarly, the Democratic Party also set up public relations office in 1928, which was followed by Republicans in 1932 (Bloom, 1973). Since then, public relations consultants have held one or more seats on the central strategy board of virtually every presidential candidate. Brian (1995) further mentions media management, image-

management, and information management as key communication functions of public relations.

Situation Analysis of PM and OPMCM of Nepal

OPMCM's administrative roles are often stable and specified, despite the change in the government. However, the law, rules and policy are largely affected by the interest of the new government and the political parties it represent. In Nepal, no single political party has two-third majority in the parliament since more than last two decades. So, the coalition governments cannot last long due to the political interest and changes in the power equation. So, the governments are formed amidst uncertainty of their tenure. As soon as country finds new PM, OPMCM's office becomes power center for different political interest, interest groups and bureaucracy. On one hand, government is under pressure to please small coalition partners and on the other, it is not easy to tackle opposition parties, who are looking for political credit against the loopholes of the government. The OPMCM has to deal with complex nature of stakeholders with different kinds of expectation, interest and impact to the government functions.

Ruling coalition-partners, opposition parties, neighboring countries, news media, opinion-makers, government agencies, business groups, multilateral and bilateral agencies and civil society groups are the major stakeholders of PM's communication. The stakeholders' level of influence and interest varies indicating urgency for OPMCM to take some measures to harness the stakeholders who might be threat to the PM's political actions through well-defined, well planned, public relations and timely communication. Through updated, timely and persuasive message, neutralizing possible negative response from the stakeholders, such as opposition parties, disgruntled influential organizations and private media is important. Government media, ruling coalition-partners, who often appear positive unless they have special interest, require persuasive communication. Diplomatic responses are required to maintain balanced relationship with neighboring countries, bilateral and multi lateral agencies.

Political communication of PM and OPMCM does not directly fall under the mandate of any government institutional mechanism, such as Ministry of Information and Communication, Department of

Information, Information Commission and Press Council.

The *Constitution of Nepal, 2015* has recognized right to communication as fundamental rights. This right has not only allowed press to enjoy their rights but has also provided opportunities to the government, political parties and institutions to use these media to serve their needs and has offered people rights to information and media selection. Constitution offers rights to communication to its citizen and also lays foundation for government agencies to comply with its provisions. On the other hand, *Right to Information Act 2007* pushes public bodies including OPMCM for the public disclosure of the information.

The government issued *Guideline on Roles and Responsibility of the Spokesperson of the Government* (2006) to systematize information dissemination to the citizen by making government policy, decision and programs transparent in line with democratic governance system and to establish harmony among the agencies related to information and communication.

According to this guideline, the Minister for Information and Communication is the Spokesperson of the government. His responsibility is to make public the decisions taken by cabinet meeting. In principle, PM's political message should be communicated by the spokesperson. Though government spokesperson is responsible to talk to media about the cabinet decisions, leaders are chosen by media based on their access. The risk of this practice is that there is high chance of message and angle of message being distorted. Such provisions are generally applied to all government institutions. However, there is no specific policy, guidelines or strategy for PM's political communication.

OPMCM has broad area of work. For formal and official communication, OPMCM disseminate information to media and those who seek information. But IT Section, PM's Contact Section and Press and International Relation department work closely with PM's Media team. Broadly OPMCM's structure is divided into two categories: one is its permanent administrative structure led by Chief Secretary and another is group of PM's political appointee.

Regular administrative communication activities are executed by Management and Human Resource Division of OPMCM under the leadership of Joint Secretary. The Joint Secretary of this division also

works as Spokesperson of the OPMCM but he generally does not speak on political issues but facilitates the process as political issues are handled by the political appointees of the PM. But regular activities and formal news or notice related to the PM can be issued by the spokesperson.

To execute PM's communication activities including planning, advice and message dissemination, PM creates his media team. This media team is not permanent and well-structured department. PM's political appointees have upper hand in communication activities, who take help from some sections of OPMCM responsible to facilitate PM's communication activities. The media team comprises two core layers — supporters and advisors.

The OPMCM uses both state-owned and privately owned media and also uses social media². In his opinion, the government has high influence in these media and this trend was started as early as the publication of *Gorkhapatra* in May 1901. But due to influence of privately-owned media, PM office has put efforts to reach out its message to public through private media as well. Similarly, official website and Twitter are other tools of PM and OPMCM's political communication.

Also there is limited human resource to execute communication functions at OPMCM³. Routine formal statements, statements related to foreign affairs, political statements, address to the nation, address to the parliament, speech in public function, messages delivered during interpersonal communications and opinion expressed in media interview are key communication contents of PM's political communication.

There are four major components in the flow of the PM's communication messages that includes contents, producers, gatekeepers and channels. Responsibility of the generating contents is based on the nature of the contents. However, major responsibility revolves around media team and often it is the responsibility of the Press Advisor to finalize the contents before they are sent to different channels.

Existing communication flow lacks clarity in specific roles and responsibilities of those involved in the process. The number of people involved in the process

² Prateek Pradhan (personal conversation). Pradhan is a former Press Advisor of former PM Sushil Koirala (2014-15).

³ Pramod Dahal (personal conversation). Dahal is former Press Advisor of former PM KP Sharma Oli,

is high but communication process has not been consolidated due to the involvement of multiple designations.

The existing process of PM's communication message requires a review for effectiveness⁴. In his observation, there is no proper mechanism to analyze possible impact of the political messages. He opines, if there is a lack of specific and clear roles and responsibility and a well-defined structure of communication process, then there is chance of less impact of the PM's communication message. Content generation is very important aspects of this process, where well defined and standard practice is required.

The quality of the content is closely related to human resource suggesting that there is lack of human resource in number and even the available human resources are not competent enough and well-trained in the subject matter, opines Pramod Dahal. He also thinks that lack of strategy and standard in the structure of PM's communication system might affect the quality of content. However, he says that OPMCM seems to have been trying its best to maintain quality in terms of language, clarity and central theme of the messages.

Several issues are raised in public domain such as fuel crisis, crime and political controversy, disaster, etc. and the OPMCM responds them through mass media channels. On some special occasions, PM him-/herself addresses the parliament or the nation.

According to Prateek Pradhan, practice of immediately responding to the issues raised in public domain by organizing press conference frequently such as daily, twice a week or on weekly basis is important for political institution like OPMCM, but this practice is absent till now. Even the advisors of PM are not able to do so for several reasons such as limited responsibility, resources and their degree of competence.

On the other hand, secretaries are also not well trained in communication to quickly understand the issues and to immediately provide advice to the PM as to how to respond and what to speak. Public issue is responded through minister in the meeting of the parliament. Similarly, PM's political messages are also circulated by inviting editors and government media. There is also the practice of addressing public issue in the public functions, where PM is invited as the guest.

Dahal informs that new initiations were started from the tenure of PM KP Oli such as responding public issues as soon as possible in Twitter, regularly updating PM's own websites and forwarding the comments of public registered to Hello Government Desk to the respective authorities.

Former Minister for Information and Communication Shankar Pokhrel opines that the communication of PM/OPMCM depends on the activeness and initiation of him/herself, spokesperson and information officer. According to him, the effectiveness of information also depends on timeliness of the information.

Conclusion and Recommendation

In Nepal, PM's message started to reach to the large number of people only after the wide population had access to mass communication means. The state-owned *Gorkhapatra* is still in publication and government has influence on it. Radio Nepal, Nepal Television and RSS (National News Agency) are also the state owned media, which indirectly promote the opinion of PM, OPMCM and works of the government. The communication function of OPMCM has been categorized into two groups — administrative and political communication. OPMCM does not have pre-plan or set of activities to harness stakeholders of communication. There is also an absence of stakeholder-engagement plan. Major institutional set up to deal with communications also do not directly mention anything about PM, OPMCM's and PM's communication is not under their mandate. Several rooms for improvement to ensure quality in content, timeliness, efficiency and effectiveness of political communication of PM and OPMCM have been identified. Other major problem identified are lacking in the structure and hierarchy in communication function, inappropriate organizational set up of communication function, lack of quality of the message, lack of awareness in media selection, and unscripted public speech of the PM among other. Similarly, inadequate human resource, inability to use available technological tools and techniques and non-compliance to the guideline (e.g. government spokesperson's guideline) among other were also found as the hurdles of effective communication of PM and OPMCM's communication. There is no written strategy in regard to political communication of PM and OPMCM. Therefore OPMCM, OPMCM is recommended to formulate a strategy to improve the

⁴ Rama Krishna Regmee (personal conversation). Regmee is a communication expert and professor of media economics.

shortfall of existing communication practice of PM and OPMCM.

The OPMCM's future communication strategy should be revised properly. The strategy should introduce key structural mechanism, their restructuring and role related to communication of OPMCM. The strategy should provide guidelines as to how to make communication of PM and OPMCM timely, effective, relevant and responsive, identify target audiences, mechanisms for sharing and exchanging knowledge, synchronize government media placement, skills, tools and technology in making clarity of the communicated message to diverse audience. The strategy should also provide guidelines on dealing with complex situation opposition negotiation, diplomatic affairs and crises. PM as the executive head of the state, through his communication mechanisms, should address public apathy, skepticism and suspicion of government initiatives, policies and programs and project good public image of the government to inject aspiration to the citizen.

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The Role of Media in Labelling Criminals

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Abstract:

This paper examines the role of Nepali media in contributing to public perceptions towards crime, which influence criminal justice system of the country. Furthermore, it analyzes sensational-crime-related news production that labels the offenders. It explains ways of media in portraying alleged offenders from marginalized caste/ethnicity and age groups. In some stances, the role of security forces is against the norms and values on presenting such alleged offenders. Police present the alleged offenders in a negative way, which the mass media highlights to grab wide public attention. They misuse those opportunities to show their advancement on crime-control thus leading towards defamation of the alleged offenders before the final verdict of the court.

Keywords: media, crime, labeling, injustice, police, public, vested-interests

Introduction

Crime news suggests a kind of "human interest" story (Sacco, 2005:88). Commercial media, profit-making enterprises, has given priority to crime stories as selling materials. Regarding the subject of crime, media has played a critical role in presenting offenders' history and highlighting nature of the crime. Based on the media reports, KC (2013b) has examined the types and nature of the crime in Nepal. Sacco (2005:79) argues that media has the power to shape collective view towards crime. On the one hand, media-made errors in its presentation in an attempt to sensationalizing crime likely produce labeling of crime; on the contrary, such news influence public perception towards crime and alleged offenders so that the innocent might be tagged as criminals. In several contexts, such wrong presentation of media has victimized decent persons and communities.

Kidd-Hewitt and Osborne (1995) explores:

mass media, particularly television, through depictions of crime, violence, death and aggression, can be proven to be a major cause or important contributory factor of criminal behaviour; ... mass media, particularly the press, construct and present our social world in ways that distort reality, and unjustly stereotype particular groups or individuals, labeling them as 'outsiders', eliminating their credibility; ... mass media engender moral panics and cause people to be fearful by over-reporting criminal events; ... real crime and fictional crime impact on the viewer in the same manner, particularly in the electronic media.

The media not only constructed crime-wave, but also labeled the criminals; in another word, criminals are not only born but also made through the vested-interest of Police, biases of other sectors of the criminal justice system and media presentation.

In the context of the coverage of the crime, media not only attempt to present the reality of the crime but also exaggerate the crime and criminals behaviour. On the other hand, the social construction of crime problems likely understood as reflecting the types of relationships that link news agencies to their sources (Sacco 1995). Such conditions influence the portraying certain innocent people and communities as criminals which have been recorded in the Nepali media. The media also have committed mistakes in presenting the context of crime and alleged offenders. Police appear to be more effective in presenting alleged offenders in the public domain. According to Sacco (1995), stories about individual crimes with their characteristic portrayals of villains and victims also have the dramatic value. In Nepal, it seemed that crime news is the "Police News". Regarding the news presentation of the alleged sex abuse from the police report, a national daily newspaper of Nepal, *Nagarik* had portrayed a social worker as a sexual abuse (Dhungana, 2014a). Nepali media rarely accepted their mistakes due to the public perception that mistakes are like sins. It was observed in the context of the case of media report of the *Nagarik* that the Newspaper continuously defended the fake news and later on accepted its mistake (Dhungana, 2014b). There are several cases of defaming innocent individuals as the criminals in

Nepalese media that they primarily rely on Police as their news source in the case of crime-related news. In one the case of an abduction and murder of a child in 2006, media played a crucial role on labeling two women for their involvement in the crime. Police had identified the offenders and arrested them but labeled those two women after media presentation provoked the sentiment of angry local people, who enforced the police to arrest them and take serious action.¹ The character of Nepalese media seemed to be biased, superficial and in several cases insensitive on producing the crime related news, as a result, brings further challenges on crime prevention. Media's role is towards injustice for the alleged offenders who are innocent. On the other hand, media itself labeled several individuals as offenders. Lack of theoretical understanding of the crime and the sensitivity of the presentation of crime-related news among the media persons have been recorded in Nepali media. Regarding the investigative report of suicide, Bohara (2013) argued poverty as the prime cause of the crime genre. However, KC (2013c) criticized the conclusion of the news report of Bohara (2013) arguing poverty cannot be the prime cause of the suicide. The superficial varieties of the reporting in crime related issues are general in prestigious Nepalese media whereas maximum media cross the ethics of journalism in broadcasting and publishing crime news.

Literature Review

Numerous studies on youth-crime have examined the media portrayals of crime as one of the factors that enforce youth at increased risk for exhibiting criminal behaviour. Davis (1999) explained that youths in contemporary society confront crisis and that crisis is of considerable scope and magnitude. Such crisis comprises problems at home, school, workplace, community, indeed; media portrayed them as a dangerous section of society while describing their character and identity as terror category of social members. KC (2014) in his news report explained gangsters active in Kathmandu Valley as a dangerous section of youth gangs. Regarding the media perception towards prison, Yadav (2016:11) in his media report revealed that Birgunj prison is still one of the notorious in Nepal with tortured, ransom-taking and terror of prison gangs. It showed horror type of media presentation on prison. Similarly, defining gangs

is often a highly political issue that reflects the interests and agendas of various individuals and agencies involved with gangs, including law enforcement personnel, politicians, advocates, social workers, media, and researchers (Kinnear, 2009:2). Evidence suggested that media presentation on the nature of gangs affect their characters on public domain.

Regarding the formation of gangs, Thrasher (1927) concluded that gangs were created in the cracks or along the boundaries of society and the gang members were not in the mainstream and did not have the advantages that others did; they were often composed of individuals who were of the lower class, left out, and ignored by the rest of society. A combination of negative media portrayals, xenophobic attitudes, and law enforcement attitudes and practices also created an image of the gang (zootsuiters) as dangerous gangsters (Franzese, 2006:117-118). In general, media inflated the situation of especially youth-related crimes. Besides, youths are portrayed as a dangerous section of gang-related crimes. The question may arise that do gangs as such really exist in the Indo-Nepal border? Are they really a threat to society as that media portrayals would have us believe?

Several evidences reflected that there exists a direct relationship between media presentations and public perceptions of crime (Gerbner & Gross, 1975). It showed that the media presentation has a higher influence on public perceptions of crime and criminals. However, Sacco (1982) denied the direct causal relationship between patterns of media consumption and perceptions of crime. No doubt, public trust media portray on crime and criminals even though they do not present actual reality. Media role seemed controversial on presenting news worldwide that Nepali media also suffered from such problems. Nepali media has defamed characters of alleged offenders, evident in various news reports. Regarding the case of a youth arrested for alleged involvement in illegal arms trafficking, police manipulated the media; hence, his photos were published in newspaper and broadcasted in electronic media (KC, 2016). His version is that media defamed him by highlighting his name and photos as a selling material that created problems for him to live an ordinary village life. In the murder case of Khyati Shrestha², a teenage girl was sentenced to

¹ Interview with the Police Officer involved in the investigation of the murder case happened on 8 September 2006 of Vivek Sharma Luintel in 2006. Interview on 10 November 2010.

² A teenage girl abducted and murdered on 5 June 2009. See: The Himalayan Times. 2009. *Khyati Murder: Nation Outraged*, 26 June.

prison and media defamed her personal character. However, she denied her involvement in the murder and expressed her hatred towards media for continuously defaming her with biased information.³ Similarly, media presentation showed its biases in the news of the murder of an eight-years old child, Vivek Sharma Luitel, in which two women were tagged as the criminals (KC, 2013d:53-54; Nepalkhabar 2016). Among the two women, Pateni Lama was sentenced to jail for her involvement as a prime designer of abduction and murder of the child (KC, 2013d:54). Paradoxically, the media role was vital on influencing police to prepare report against Lama. Media presentation provoked public; police was biased and Lama became the victim of Nepali criminal justice system. Both murders were covered extensively in national news, which pulled public into discussion and action. Public feelings and actions became political and it manipulated police actions. In another case, police arrested gangsters and filed the cases of drugs-related crime against them. However, an imprisoned 'gangster' denied his involvement on using and selling any types of narcotics. Indeed, these are highlighted crime-cases of the city areas. In addition to these, there are several other crime cases in which media prejudices cannot be ignored. Such activities contribute to increase errors of the criminal justice system of Nepal. In general, Nepali media actively engage in problem-construction rather than problem-solving.

Methodology

The researcher has applied strategies based on grounded theory, which involves using various cases to explore in-depth knowledge about role of media in exposing as well as making criminal and affecting the criminal justice in Nepal. The researcher has primarily used secondary data to examine problems on media presentation on crime-related issues. This research work is a part of crime-related research works of PhD thesis in prisons of Kathmandu and Birgunj. Furthermore, the researcher observed the media presentation on crime issues during the fieldwork.

Apart from that, the researcher has used various sources to gather facts about issues related to media and crime regarding crime-control and prevention

methods. Basic information was obtained from Department of Prison Management, Nepal Police, media, prisoners and other sources.

Theoretical Framework

Society labels or tags criminal to specific individual, groups, community, and caste. Meanwhile, several media also support such labeling of criminal for the vested interests of particular groups. According to Becker (1963:9), "social groups create deviance by making the rules whose infraction constitutes deviance, and by applying those rules to particular people and labeling them as outsiders." Becker's theoretical approach does not accept a definition of a crime or a criminal act as an absolute, but rather to explore the criminal justice system processes and constructions of definition of deviance. Social member of more powerful groups is rarely or less labeled and punished than those from less powerful groups. Hence, one's age, class, caste, ethnicity, race, status, and other social characteristics determine the probability of arrest, conviction, and imprison. Labeling theorists argue that law and criminal justice system represent the interests of upper and middle classes, majority and dominant groups in society over those of the lower-class, backward and minority groups. Becker (1963) maintained that the formation of individual's identity is a reflection of other's definition of those individuals. Such reflection also contributes to determining labeling one a criminal. Hence, labeling theorists mention that criminal identity is a very likely outcome of labeling and the persons also act from their identity.

Regarding media role in presenting crime in Nepal, it contributed to labeling of crime for the vested interests of some sections, especially police and other interest-groups. In several contexts, media biases are reflected through its ignorance regarding nature and aspects of the crime. According to Steffens (1931), the amount of the press attention is vital for the construction of crime waves. On the other hand, media persons also attempted to present news reports as sensational rather than finding fact and presenting fact reports. Consequently, such activities have adverse impacts on the criminal justice system.

Media Intervention

Mass media is a potent force that affects human behaviour and reinforces a very significant role in influencing social members towards crime. Meanwhile, growing power of social media plays a significant role

See: thehimalayantimes.com/kathmandu/khyati-murder-nation-outraged (Accessed on 24 December 2016).

³ Interview of the head of the Women Cell at Central Prison Kathmandu on 4 December 2011. Convicted murder of Khyati Shrestha, Merina Shakya, refused to interview the author and the head of the Women Cell explained the case behalf of Shakya.

in behaviour of social members. Media primarily reflects society's reaction towards phenomenon, persons and groups. For example, they use the term 'gang' as a criminal group rather than a non-criminal group. According to Cooper (2009:4), gangs are most often seen as juvenile delinquents and criminals, who are more likely to be a threat to communities and public order, frequently as drug traffickers and violent criminals. In addition, Cooper outlines the popular images in media often portray gang members as criminals, and they are widely perceived such. The reflection of media manipulates perception of ordinary people towards crime that they readily express negative thought. Mass media, including movies, also create false perspectives in their presentation of crime. Soothill (1998) revealed dangerous ways of media coverage and presentation on issues of crime and alleged offenders. Nepalese media are also behaving dangerously in the coverage of crime that prejudicial and excessive publicity are not unusual. Repeatedly presenting city gangsters as notorious criminals make the public feel that they are a prime problem of peace and security of the country. However, key culprits who operate such gangsters for their vested interests are always behind the scenes. Nepali media, in the certain context, sensationalized the gangsters and their connection with political leaders (KC, 2013d:157). However, lack of evidence raised questions on credibility of such news report that leads to further illusion among public in the world of criminal gangs. Similarly, evidences showed that image of offenders of Indo-Nepal cross-border crime is lower-class, marginalized people residing in underprivileged areas (KC, 2016). Moreover, media presented the detained in a way that they are already declared guilty, before the actual verdict of the court. Prejudiced statements by prosecutors, police and defense lawyers to media before and during trials are frequent that may tarnish personal life of the detainee under trial.

Media is vital to increase and decrease of crime rates. It also associated with how media portray crime and how it presents issues, which directly affect the future of crime world. The role of media is that of a catalyst in curbing and discouraging youths in deviance of crime. Kumar (2006:43) analyzed a triangular relation between media, youth and crime — each variable affect the other two, and are simultaneously affected by their counterpart. Portraying right or wrong in media can influence youth behaviour, in addition, role-models affect youth activities. In case of Nepal, media presentations on gangsters and heroic activities of

police influence youth attraction towards gang as well as police. KC (2014) argued that Nepalese youths are likely to attract towards criminal gangs for power and money. Media presentation of heroic activities of police is also associated with power relations that likely motivate new generation towards police. Sensational media presentation on killing of two gangsters, Dinesh Adhikari (aka Chari) and Sujan Shrestha (aka Kumar Ghaite) in 2014 and 2015 respectively showed them villain and those who ordered the killing, police officers Pushkar Karki and Sarbendra Khanal, as heroes (KC, 2014; Panthi, 2016). However, media role was biased on the cases where they ignored a negative method of crime control by the police. Prevention-related news is not in priority for discouraging youths otherwise attracted towards such criminal gangs.

The media has influenced shaping our everyday understanding of youth questions, especially youth involvement in crime. According to KC (2013a:101), media seemed to be a catalyst in rising incidence of crime among youths. Sacco (2005:80) urged to find out the importance of truths about content and influence of crime news. Media has also played negative role against the truth of crime. One of the consequences of media presentation is negative perception of people towards young groups. Across media, negative images of young dominate the stories and documentaries as selling materials. France (2007) criticizes media for exaggerating a growing picture of youth crime. In addition, government has been influential in fuelling and reinforcing perception of youth problem. On the other hand, public consciousness of youth crime is fuelled by mass media. The press takes an interest in reporting youth-related crime. Nepalese media has prioritized and featured sales-promotion approach to crime stories, sensitized the incident, rather than aiming at decreasing crime (KC 2016). Criminalization of everyday lives of young people through media coverage reflects prejudices towards young. In addition, process of media demonization has expanded to cover almost every wrong activity young people do, reflecting and reinforcing policy makers' drive against youth sentiments. Media interest and movies portrayed out-of-control youth-gangs and criminal life in urban areas. Media presentation of today's youth and biases of policymakers towards youths are inter-related in a way that they have close connection reflecting intention of defaming young rather than finding long-term solutions. Moreover, media prejudices enforce law enforcement to label innocent.

Negative Stereotypes

No doubt, lower class social members are at greatest risk that they are being reported, arrested, and committed. The frequent arrests of young lower class people contribute to formulating negative stereotypes towards them. However, such stereotypes towards marginalized young people also contribute to enforcing towards crime. Furthermore, negative stereotypes contribute to making errors in knowing crime as well as deals with crime. Society itself has to pay the cost in return of negative perception to certain age groups and community and that real culprit get out of law enforcement. Reckless (1967:110) argued that some part of higher crime risks for lower-class persons is because such persons are exposed to demoralizing and disorganizing conditions of living. They are more exposed to unemployment, overcrowding, disease as well as other kinds of negative stereotypes.

First and foremost, there are media projected caste/ethnic stereotypes and fears. It overlooks problems of the poor, rather highlight that they are a problem of society and exaggerate about the poor involved in crime (Bohara, 2014). Suicide is one of the problems associated with economically poor. However, research proved that poverty has fewer roles on the chances of suicide (KC, 2014). Superficial media reports in crime-related issues bring further problem in dealing with crime.

Paradoxically, media rarely disclose and prioritize the involvement of upper and privileged class member in criminal activities. Lewen (2014:358) argued that mainstream media rarely pays sustained attention to anything that primarily impacts poor people, unless it poses a threat to middle-class people. Coyle (2005:105) outlined that media points out two contrasting pictures of prison life — a) dangerous environment associate with a threat of violence and brutality, b) prison as a holiday camp. However, the former one is an image of the prison in the mind of general people. The stereotypes of prison character as horror places are also reflected in media, mostly social media and television (Yadav, 2016). Nepalese media has a superficial understanding of prisons.

Poor people have high likelihood of committing blue-collar crime, rather than white-collar crime. Thus, media target the former as they are easier to cover and depict in graphic ways (Dixon, 2011:19). Blue collar crime-related news is economical to cover and also could increase their audiences, hence keeping advertising profits high. Media have their interest in

this consumerist society. Thus, not being the best-selling news, sorrowful story of inmates and their steps towards positive path is rarely disseminated.

Considering the positive role of media in rehabilitation and reintegration of offenders, Cruz (2010) stated that media completely diffused correctional facilities. But Nepalese media has less interest and less concentration in prison-related issues. They are concentrated on petty crimes and criminals than white-collar criminals and upper-level operators. Yousman (2013:141) argued that media focused dramatized-show as the most prevalent source of fictional images of crime and detention. Media cooperated with the police in presenting sensational pictures of the "criminal elements" infested by crime (Bauman, 2007:28). Moreover, commercial media displayed distorted images of crime totally different than in the real world. On the other hand, media overlooked prison problems and issues. Social consciousness is a major factor to pressurize transformation of prison system so that academics and concerned groups become involved in prison issues (McShane, 2008:58). Regarding the prison issues, mythos of danger and deviance associated with incarceration are created to captivate audience attention and consumers money (Yousman, 2013:145). Hence, media is rarely contributing as watchdog of prison for reformation of prison system and encouraging rehabilitation of in-mates, but ironically contributing to feelings of hatred towards in-mates and overlooking injustice on labeled offenders.

With regards to the organized criminals active in the Netherlands, Fijnaut et al. (1998:32) demonstrate that corruption is used as an effort to undermine effectiveness of authorities; influential people — lawyers, accountants, social-scientists, governments officials and so forth are used to counterbalance possible government intervention. They added that the media is manipulated to deliberately discredit particular officials. Criminal groups might use media to promote their interests (Fijnaut et al. 1998, 195). They make propaganda against those, who present as obstacles and label them culprit by defaming them in the society.

Conclusion

Media does not seem to be responsible for crime coverage and have focused on selling crime-stories exaggerating in a way that reality is far beyond coverage. Media persons are temporarily benefitted

but real problems remain the same and in some cases create additional problem than the past. Media persons felt that highlighting and exaggerating serious crime brings public attention and contribute to combat crime; however, such activities also bring injustice and counter-products.

Police perspective implicit in crime news-reporting likely contributes to errors on news, which influence establishment of a wrong mindset among public. As a consequence, the fact of crime and criminals remained hidden and tagging of criminals increased. Lack of investigative reporting without prejudice seemed rare in Nepalese media; however, bias and distortion in electronic media as in print media have been recorded. Thrilling media reports associated with crime, blood and politics in vested-interest or cheap popularity contributing new forms of youth crimes.

Theoretically and ideally mass media can be means for constructive crime prevention and cure in Nepal. However, the transformation is essential to bring such condition. A better example is doctor, who targets the treatment of the patient rather than his/her interest in prescribing right medicine. Media can play a significant role in prevention and intervention of crime. However, transformation is essential in media presentation concerning youth-related crime.

Media plays significant role in portraying youth of particular class, caste, region, and status as criminals. In several instances, media inflated youth-related crime that they portrayed as a terrible section in gang-related crimes. In general, their presentation about alleged offenders, who are innocent, tarnished their future.

Presenting police official as a hero and youth offenders as villain is problematic. Moreover, media rarely criticized the negative role of the police. Media presentation and reaction contribute to turn innocent into labeled offender and as a result is sentenced to prison. They are not showing genuine journalistic responsibilities in presenting sensitive types of crime coverage; rather they have focused on selling crime stories exaggerating such that reality is far from coverage. Media presentation focused on blue-collar crime, where lower-class people are mostly involved rather than white-collar crime, where upper-class people commit such crime. Media prejudice also contributes in exaggerating blue-collar crime and also labeling lower class and backward-caste people as criminals.

Recommendation

Media literacy program could minimize adverse effects of both global and local media. Training is essential for media persons to transform the negative presentation related to youth crisis and problems. Mass media should play a constructive role in the prevention of youth crime and they have to hear the voices of alleged offenders and refrain from any judgments about them.

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Dharaharā vs. Kāsthmaṇḍap Coverage

Post 2015 Gorkhā Earthquake:

Critique on the Educational Role of Media

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Abstract

Following the 2015 Gorkhā earthquake, the mainstream papers showed the image of Dharaharā, a 19th century tower as a symbol of the magnanimity of the destruction. A few miles into the inner city, another important public heritage Kāsthmaṇḍap at least a thousand years old received too less coverage and attention. As an elite heritage of new polity of modern Shah-era Nepal, Dharaharā received state patronage with Prime Minister too donating for its reconstruction; while Kāsthmaṇḍap (and many other ancient and medieval heritages) did not receive such attention despite the latter being major attractions of tourists and more revenue-yielding. Dharaharā too was represented by media as symbol of nationality, while the essence of public heritage as Kāsthmaṇḍap (and such age-old heritages) was null for mainstream audiences. Critical questions, therefore, can be raised to the educational role of media.

Keywords: Dharahara, Kasthamandap, Gorkha earthquake, news coverage, education role, critical pedagogy

Background¹

A powerful earthquake measuring 7.8 M_w on the Richter scale hit Nepal at 11:56 a.m. on 25 April 2015 and many other aftershocks followed the biggest quake of the century. It brought down the historic *Dharaharā* (hereafter spelt *Dharahara*, without diacritical marks) claiming 60 lives (Pokhrel, 2015:56) and now what remains of the tower is only a stump measuring 10 meters. The following day on 26 April 2015 [13 *Vaiśākha* 2072], headlines on the front page of national dailies read (or translates) —

Strong earthquake in Nepal, Dharahara collapsed,
large destruction

Annapurna Post [Nepali]

Dozens shocks, thousands injured [with a front
page photograph of collapsed Dharahara]

Nagarik Daily [Nepali]

This is how the popular national dailies portray the effect of the magnanimous earthquake.

Only a few kilometers from this tower into the ancient city there collapsed many other heritages, dating back to the medieval and even ancient periods. Among many such heritages, I focus on one of the most ancient heritages in the area — *Kāsthmaṇḍapa* (hereafter *Kasthamandap*, again without diacritical marks) that collapsed to ground claiming 40 lives (Pokhrel, 2015:56). I take the idea of critical pedagogy to critically question the educational role of Nepali mass media to aware about this age-old heritage. I focus on the idea of critical pedagogy of Paulo Freire (1921 – 1997 AD), Henry Giroux (b. 1943 AD) and Peter McLaren (b. 1948 AD).

Any heritage over a century old is considered of importance by archaeology, pursuant to *Ancient Monument Preservation Act, 1956* (2013). Based on this claim, both *Dharahara* and *Kasthamandap* are of equal importance by law, and by the death tolls too both deserve equal attention. But as a tower structure (See the table at the end of the article for details) and a

¹ This article profusely uses inputs from my previous unpublished article entitled *Debating Identity: Reflections on Media Coverage of Dharaharā and Kāsthmaṇḍap in Nepali National Newspapers post Gorkhā-Earthquake 2015*. I am thankful to Prof. Rama Krishna Regmee and Dr. Hari Adhikari for their wonderful insights for this article. However, I take the responsibility for this writing. I sincerely acknowledge Dr. Mahes Raj Pant for the insight on Kasthamandap, journalists Shanti Bikram Gautam and Dipak Prasad Sapkota and KCC library for the collection.

I have used International Alphabet for Sanskrit Transliteration (IAST) symbols for non-Sanskrit readers; however in most cases I have tried to retain popular spellings, with diacritical marks.

popular landmark, *Dharahara* received much greater attention in the mass media, including in messages appealing for funds for post-earthquake reconstruction. Moreover, mass media used it as a symbol for all Nepalese heritages — new and old, popular and elite, public and private.

Kasthamandap: Ancient Public Heritage

If *Dharahara* was the elite heritage, then *Kasthamandap* was a public one: with many different public rituals in practice since time unknown. The *Kasthamandap* gives the national capital, Kathmandu, its name. *Kasthamandap*, as "an important shrine in the [social and cultural] life" of the ancient and medieval Kathmandu, had "lend its name to the locality that grew around it" and subsequently the name "gradually acquired a much wider connotation with the passage of time" (Thapa, 1968:43).

Risal (2015:1) describes it as "the largest structure ever built in the traditional triple-tiered roof style ... [with large ground floor space] until the eighteenth century".

Thapa (1968:42) describes the wooden pavilion as:

... a temple ... on a square plinth, built of bricks, that measures 65 ft. 11 in. on each side[,] ... the superstructure resting on the single-terraced plinth ... supported by four massive wooden pillars of square cross-section, that arch [arch?] upto the ceiling of the roof. Two successive floors of receding sizes rest on the basic pillars. The main deity enshrined in the *sanctum sanctorum* at the ground floor is that of Shri Gorakhanatha (carved in stone).²

Legend has it that the wooden pavilion was made of woods from a single tree — a mythical *Kalpabrikṣa* that still contributed to another public building *Siṃhasattal* (originally *siḷyo(n) satta*, meaning in local *Nepāl Bhāṣā*, the pavilion made of remaining woods) south of *Kasthamandap*. Wright's chronicle (1877:211) dates it to *Lakṣmī-Narasimha Malla's* reign, but discrepancy occurs in the chronicle's date of 1595 AD (NS 715)³ against the actual reign of *Lakṣmī-Narasimha Malla*, i.e. 1621 – 1641 AD (NS 741 – 761). Often *Līlāvajra Vajrācārya* is associated with its construction in local lore (Bajracarya, 2010), but Pant (2015b) points out discrepancies with dates and methodical errors for

Bajracarya's claim. However, several scholars (Vajracharya, 1962; Thapa, 1968; Slusser & Vajracarya, 1974; Pant, 2015a; Risal, 2015) have claimed the ancient construction of *Kasthamandap*. Risal (2015:10) asserts:

Kasthamandap was at least 900 years old and possibly more than a thousand, at the time of the 2015 earthquakes. It was therefore the oldest building in Kathmandu and anywhere in the entire surrounding Valley. It was also the largest traditional building.

Only later with the research by a team of national and foreign archaeologists working at the destroyed heritage in the aftermath of the disaster was it dated to 8th century AD.⁴

It was largely used as a public rest-house for traders through the city, and the area of *Maru tole* has been for centuries a popular market-place in the southern half of the city. Risal (2015:2) describes:

Kasthamandap occupies a central location in Kathmandu valley ... [and it] sits squarely at the crossroads of the ancient trade route that connected India with Tibet and the principal North-South road of Kathmandu. (emphasis in the original)

A water-color painting by Henry Ambrose Oldfield from the 1860s reproduced in Risal (2015:2) also supports the claim. The idea of the same painting is almost an everyday scenario in this ancient area, except for the modern-day interventions of automobiles, electricity wires and concrete structures, among others.

This heritage lies in the ancient core of the city a little towards the southern half. As a UNESCO World Heritage Site, the area is visited by tourists all round the year and it contributes more in terms of revenue from tourism industry.

Dharahara tower: Heritage of New Polity

In contrast, *Dharaharā* tower is (or was) a modern heritage and a popular landmark known to all. Before its fall in 2015 earthquake, it was a nine-storey tower with a spiral staircase of 213 steps, a balcony at eighth floor and a 5.2 meter (17 feet) bronze mast atop.⁵

Dhungel (2015) discusses of two *Dharaharas* in existence during *Mukhtiyār* [= Prime Minister] *Bhimsen Thapa's* time (1775 – 1839 AD), called the *Mahārānī*

² Thapa (1968:39) refers this as *Loyipōdo Siddho*, while Pant (2015a) recognizes it as *Lūipō*, referring to a monograph entitled '*Śrīnāthotīrthhōvōli*' compiled by the *Rājō* of Jodhpur, *Mānasingh* (emphasis in the original).

³ Pant (2015a) adds a line "This was constructed in NS 715" from the folio 126 of MS in the collection of University of Cambridge. But an English version of Wright (1877) in my collection, unfortunately, does not have this line.

⁴ An official press release was issued by the official website of Durham University stating the finding. See the full text in this link: www.dur.ac.uk/cech/news/?Itemno=29555.

⁵ See the comparison of both these heritages in Figure 3 at the end of the article.

Dharahara (named after Queen *Lalit Tripurasundari*, 1794 – 1832 AD, regent rule: 1806 – 1832 AD) and *General Dharahara* (named after *Bhimsen Thapa*). He adds, in the 1834 AD earthquake, the *General Dharahara* collapsed, while the taller and wider *Mahārānī Dharahara* survived with needs for repairs. Dhungel claims that a century later, again in the earthquake of 1934 AD, the *Mahārānī Dharahara* collapsed and was rebuilt by *Juddha Shumsher JBR* (reign: 1932 – 1952 AD); this later became popular as *Bhimsen Stambha* (*Bhimsen* column, or more popular *Dharahara*).

Nepal (2015) sees the use of this tower was to disseminate information to public by blowing a bugle from atop, hence serving military and even administrative works.

Before 2015, the tower was open to public under a joint venture of Kathmandu Metropolitan City and Sidewalkers Pvt. Ltd. They have signed a memorandum of understanding for the same. When a proposal was made to bring to common tourist access the *Dharahara* and *Sundhara* with *Hanuman Dhoka Durbar Square*, it invoked public outcry and the proposal had to be withdrawn under public pressure. As previously, separate entry provisions prevailed again.

As politics changed hand in modern Nepal, this tower heritage represented the new polity, outside the ancient core, however. It was opened for general public to climb the circular stairs of this tower and to visit a *Śiva*-lingam at the top. Few years later, the balcony had to be encaged to ensure the safety of visitors, wishing to see a bird's eye-view of the city.

Collapse of *Dharahara* and *Kasthamandap*: Coverage in Mainstream Media

In the 2015 *Gorkhā* earthquake, it was not the first time that the tower of *Dharahara* fell. Its fall to 1834 earthquake can be related to *Bhimsen Thapa*'s fall from power, especially after the death of the regent Queen. Historian Dhungel (2015) adds:

After the fall of *General Dharahara* (of *Bhimsen Thapa*), his power in the rule started decreasing. Thus, the *Dharahara* named after him could not be reconstructed at that time.⁶

Many papers synonymized *Dharahara* with another phonetically-similar Nepali word '*dharohara*', meaning heritage. Figure 1 represents the media presentation of

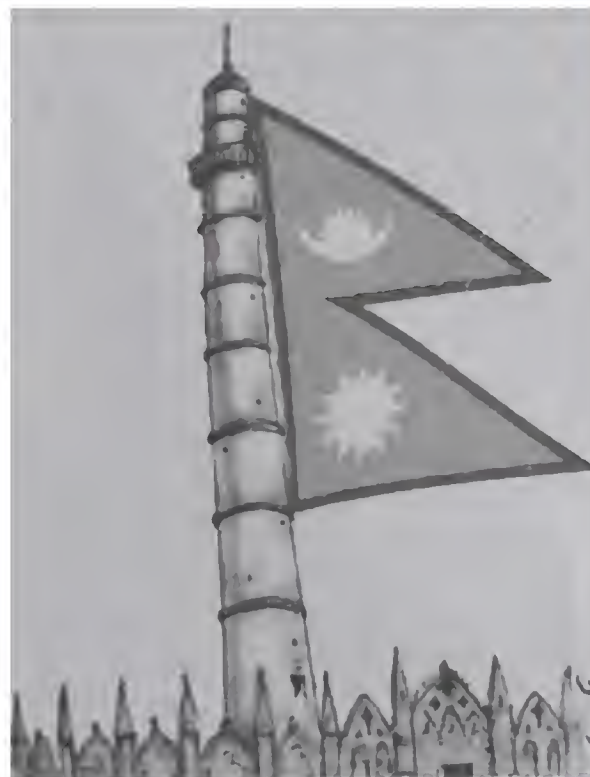


Figure 3: *Dharaharā* as symbol of national unity

Source: *Nagarik Dainik* (29 Baisakh 2072, 12 May 2015)

Dharahara as a symbol of national unity by *Nagarik* daily (12 May 2015) and Figure 2 on the other page shows the appeal message by *Kantipur* daily in the aftermath of the quake. Both these figures represented *Dharahara* as the national *dharohara*.

Human stories side received priority in many dailies, especially those of eye-witness and survivor-stories. Many versions of the fall from *Dharahara* by eye-witnesses were reported in news, e.g. '*Dharaharāko tuppobāta khasdā pani bāciyo*' [Alive even after falling from the top of *Dharaharā*] by *Babita Sedhai* in *Annapurna Post* (30 April 2015), '*Jyāna Jogiyeke Janmadina*' [Life-saving Birthday] by *Gopikrishna Dhungana* in *Annapurna Post* (23 July 2015) and '*Dharaharā cāra tukrā vaera dhalayo*' [*Dharaharā* fell into four pieces] by *Bijay Chamling* in *Rajdhani* (14 May 2015). Some videos of the fall from *Dharahara* went viral in YouTube⁷ as well.

Dharahara found more space in the national dailies in different forms, viz. symbolizing enormity of damage by the quake (reflected by the use of photos of devastated *Dharahara* for news and appeal for funds for reconstruction, in Figure 1 and 2), call to rising back (e.g. "*Dharahara* will rise back from ruins ... A campaign

⁶ Historian Ramesh Dhungel speaks for *Naya Patrika Dainik* (2015).

⁷ See: "Dharahara Falling Live Nepal Earthquake 2072/2015" at www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qwr3bljnzPo.



Figure 4: Remaining stump of Dharahara used for appeal for disaster relief funds

Source: Kantipur Daily

of *Naya Patrika* for national self-determination" and in T-shirt campaigns "Together we will rise back ..."), national identity (in an article by Gopinath Mainali for *Nagarik Daily*, in figure 1) and as jewel of the ancient city of Kathmandu (as portrayed in an article in *Rajdhani* entitled "*Dhvasta Dharaharā ra Siudo Puchiyeke Kāṣṭhamāṇḍu*", 14 May 2015). *Dharahara* was marked the national heritage/beauty and its collapse was metaphorically presented as the entirety of loss by Nepal to the greatest quake of the century.

Not limiting to the human survivor stories relating to *Dharahara*, the dailies gave historical details of the tower as well. *Naya Patrika* dated 12 May 2015 published voices of historian Gyanmani Nepal and Ramesh Dhungel (both presented based on their conversations with Sujit Mainali). The former claimed that the tower was constructed to give information; while the latter claimed of two towers in existence in Kathmandu.

The media, at least, reinforced the hype created by National Reconstruction Authority (NRA) that the *Dharahara* should be rebuilt — at least for the pride. Some articles published by national dailies in the aftermath of the quake presented as if rebuilding *Dharahara* would bring back the lost beauty of Kathmandu. One might say that these coverage on imparted on readers that *Dharahara* should be raised again. Different public organizations and corporate also came up with the offer to take this charge (for instance, "*Bhūkampa pratirodhātmaka Dharaharā banne*" [*Dharahara* to be made earthquake-resistant] by Nabin Luitel in *Rajdhani* dated 20 May 2015,

"*Jagadambā Steelsle Dharaharā punarnirmāṇa garne*" [*Dharahara* to be reconstructed by Jagadamba Steels] by *Annapurna Post* dated 4 May 2015 and "*Jagadambāle Dharaharā punarnirmāṇa garne*" [*Dharahara* to be reconstructed by Jagadamba] in *Rajdhani* dated 5 May 2015). Even the Department of Archaeology too has such commitments (for instance, "*Dharaharā durustai banāine*" [*Dharahara* to be made exact] by *Annapurna Post* on 25 May 2015 and "*Pahilekai svarūpamā Kāṣṭhamāṇḍap banne*" [*Dharahara* to be made as previous] by *Rajdhani* on 7 June 2015). *Dharahara* also gained certain sympathy for its historical bricks being stolen (see: *Dharaharāko avaśeṣa dhamādham ghar lagīdai* [Ruins of *Dharahara* being taken to home] by Shreelochan Rajopadhyaya for *Naya Patrika* dated 27 April 2015). The ruins of *Dharahara* also became a point of attraction for people from far and wide — a photo of crowd coming to see the ruins of *Dharahara* was published by *Naya Patrika* on the same date.

About raising the *Dharahara* back, Situala writes in an opinion piece entitled "*durbala Dharaharā, durbala netṛtva*" [weak *Dharahara*, weak leadership] for *Annapurna Post* dated 1 May 2015:

Dharahara must not be raised weak, as national leaders of today. Now *Dharahara* must nurture strong leadership in symbolic meaning for the nation and for its future.⁸

On the other hand, the scholarship and discourse of Nepali media of the ancient heritage of *Kasthamandap*, however, was much limited to local lore — that it was constructed of the wood of a single tree, and it gave Kathmandu its name. Some referred to Wright's *vaṁśāvalī* to state its medieval origin, while some quoted (erroneously)⁹ Bajracharya (2010) to relate it with Līlāvajra Vajrācārya, a Buddhist priest.

Two articles in the period under review by Pant brothers-scholars deny the medieval-period-origin theory of *Kasthamandap* — Mahes Raj Pant's articles in *Rajdhani* daily dated 31 July and 1 September (2015a, b) and Dinesh Raj Pant's article "*Kāṣṭhamāṇḍapa (Marusattala)*" in *Sukarabar* weekly (editor: Rajan Nepal) dated 15 May 2015 (p.8). Both articles give several evidences of the existence of *Kasthamandap* way before the reign of *Lakṣmī-Narasimha Malla* (1621 – 1641 AD). Other scholars (Thapa, 1968; Risal, 2015)

⁸ Translated from Nepali language by author.

⁹ See: Pant (2015b) in *Rajdhani* daily dated 1 September. The article can also be read at: www.rajdhani.com.np/article/0376561001441029072.

too have nullified the medieval-origin-theory. Similarly, Mahes Raj Pant also criticize Bajracharya (2010)'s claim that Līlāvajra Vajrācārya built the *Kasthamandap*.

The unavailability of any footage of the *Maru tole* so far forces us to depend on the stories of survivors and accounts of eye-witnesses to narrate the fall of *Kasthamandap*. On the day of the earthquake on 25 April 2015, a local financial institution, by the name of *Nimbus Savings and Credit Cooperative*, had organized a blood-donation camp inside *Kasthamandap*. Altogether 54 people were reportedly "preparing to take a group photograph when the ground beneath them started shaking and brought down the ... temple, killing ten."¹⁰ One survivor, *Amit Awale*, shares the following account¹¹:

Everything and everyone seemed to be moving.
Bricks and mud started falling down ... nearby
temples began going down one by one.

Another survivor, *Laxman Ranjit* of *Chikanmugal*, *Kathmandu* and also a weight-lifting national champion from the Armed Police Force (APF), shares this account during blood donation:

First, *Kasthamandap* and the earth started shaking slightly... I got [deep] into *Kasthamandap* thinking it safe. Those inside started running out ... Taking out the needle, I carried my son outside. Nilu [his wife] remained in. I was only few steps outside when the *Kasthamandap* collapsed with a large sound. I had never expected it.¹²

The national champion lost his wife to the collapse, managed to save his child and suffered a serious leg-injury. It is with his version that we need to depend on, as the former fails to give a detailed account of the collapse of a millennium-old structure.

The call for reconstruction of *Kasthamandap* gained prominence in local discourse only: media either did not receive any such information or they did not see any prominence in the reconstruction of at least a thousand year old heritage. Dipesh Risal launched a website (www.rebuildkasthamandap.com) from San Diego, California in the US in an attempt to spread awareness of this heritage. The same was carried on as social media pages. Along with Risal, several local youths were also concerned in finding the lost inscriptions of *Kasthamandap*, especially the one

attached to the temple woods.¹³ On 22 June 2015, an artistic representation of *Kasthamandap* was made into a mural art at Babarmahal, Kathmandu and another 3-D replica of *Kasthamandap* was handed over to the Kathmandu Metropolitan City (KMC) by artist Hera Ratna Brahmacharya. On 7 November 2015, Saturday, Ar. Wolfgang Korn contributed his collection of the structural drawings of the *Kasthamandap* to KMC in an effort to rebuild the millennium-old wooden pavilion. These efforts received no attention from national dailies, and only a small concerned circle knew of such efforts and such information was shared only in their personal social media pages.

Very late, *Kasthamandap* received some media attention, when a team of archaeologists from Durham University, UK and Department of Archaeology, Nepal conducted series of excavation in the destroyed site of *Kasthamandap*. While heritage experts from the world joined in to study this ancient heritage, the issue was not covered largely by the media. The findings were covered by major media, but all lacked follow-up additional information. Even the locals knew little of what went on behind the closed boundaries of the foundation of the *Kasthamandap* temple and what outcomes did they bring forth. Though lacking media and even local people's attention (perhaps because they were already troubled with their own loss), the most important thing this research contributed is to date the construction of *Kasthamandap*. Using the combination of "Ground Penetrating Radar (GPR) and excavation to identify and map sub-surface archaeological heritage and evaluate the foundations of key damaged monuments in order to inform engineers and architects tasked with reconstruction and conservation of collapsed monuments"¹⁴, the team¹⁵ concluded after two-months work that

¹³ One historical inscription dated 1422 AD (now lost after the collapse of the *Kasthamandap*) has been published by D R Regmi (1966:15-16) § LII. The complete text is also available in this link: www.rebuildkasthamandap.com/copper-plate-inscription-of-kasthamandap-1422-2.

¹⁴ See footnote #4.

¹⁵ The team consisted of Nepalese and foreign archaeologists, soil scientists, historians and architects and was co-led by Professor Robin Coningham (UNESCO Chair in Archaeological Ethics and Practice in Cultural Heritage, Durham University, UK), Kosh Prasad Acharya (former Director-General of Department of Archaeology) and Ram Bahadur Kunwar (Head of Excavations Branch, Department of Archaeology). The project was conducted jointly by Durham University (UK), Department of Archaeology (Nepal), UNESCO and local government agencies with support from Arts and Humanities Research Council and National Geographic. Field support were provided by academics from University of Stirling

¹⁰ Nepal Samacharpatra (2015) published in *Nepali Times* (No. 757). The death toll has risen to 45 afterwards (and probably more?), as rescue efforts continued days after the quake (Pokhrel, 2015:56).

¹¹ See this link of *Nepali Times* archive: archive.nepalitimes.com/article/from-nepali-press/The-fall-of-Kasthamandap,2234.

¹² Ghising. (2015). Translated from Nepali language by the author.

Kasthamandap was constructed in the 8th century — 400 years earlier than it was traditionally thought. They even traced a nine-cell *mandala* design made out of brick walls at the depth of some 1.6 meters as the foundation of the colossal wooden structure — a resilient construction method with symbolic configuration of a microcosm found in no other monuments (Neupane, 2016).

A Critical Insight into Media's Education Role: Theoretical Epilogue

Here is my central argument on the education role of media: the Nepali media have given more importance to *Dharahara*, an elite heritage homogenous to those still in power, than *Kasthamandap*, a public heritage in the Kathmandu valley populated by the indigenous *Newār* community. The critical questions therefore are: Have the Nepali media really educated us well of both these heritages? Have they facilitated us to critically think how they represented these heritages? Have they given importance to one heritage over the other (though it might have been done unconsciously)? Have media segregated the age-old heritages of the indigenous against the modern ones?

We generally regard education as one of the roles of mass media and surely an important one too. The question, however, is how well media have been performed this.

The idea of critical pedagogy, as a philosophy of education, takes its origin from the works of Paulo Freire (1921 – 1997 AD). A professor of history and philosophy of education at University of Recife in Brazil, Freire discusses of a way of critically thinking and exploring the dialogic relationships between teaching and learning in his 1968 work *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Against the traditional knowledge-banking model, Freire took anti-authoritarian and interactive approach to recognize connections between individual problems and social contexts in which they are embedded.

The *Kasthamandap* is a heritage maintained by what Freire calls the oppressed — the indigenous group, whose association to resources and power has been limited time and again by the rulers of modern Nepal. Very few locals, if any, have come up with a critical question regarding the cultural resource-pools that *Kasthamandap* was once associated with. Next,

Kathmandu Metropolitan City had taken to itself to restrict the usage (and access) of this otherwise public heritage. Only in certain festive rituals (e.g. *pañcadān* of Buddhists, *busārā* temple anniversary etc.) was the space of *Kasthamandap* used by locals. This authoritarian approach was not met with any major serious challenge in visible or legal forms.

The works of Henry Giroux (b. 1943) too adds to the idea of critical pedagogy, what he calls a praxis-oriented approach. Giroux's idea of critical pedagogy is concerned with the strengthening of democracy or a critical mass, and linking the academia with community. He calls school "political sites" (2005:127) where cultural politics shape student's character and identity. His idea of border crossing is of special relevance to critically educate the indigenous or minority groups — the idea and practice of democracy should include them as well, and thus democracy should be seen as a "radical social practice" (p. 129). "[I]n opposition to hegemonic codes of culture, subjectivity, and history," he encourages "discourse of difference" (p. 144) and teachers to be "border-crossers" (p. 146). The idea of border crossing then applies to critical educators to go beyond the borders of one's socio-cultural contexts to step into the shoes of what previously was called the other.

Another critical question to media then arises: did they strengthen the locals with enough information about *Kasthamandap* as they did for *Dharahara*? Did they really critically educate the indigenous group? The border-crossing idea then is relevant solution also for media to step into the shoes of what the state has othered since historical past. Much local efforts to revive the *Kasthamandap* going unreported (not just under-reported) could have been avoided had media been really responsible. The idea of border-crossing model would require media-persons transcend the boundaries of his/her socio-cultural contexts (as an ethnologist, perhaps) and think or act as the others. Only with such proactive performance, perhaps, the media can effectively function to give voice to the voiceless and enhance its educational functions.

Peter McLaren (b. 1948) has further expanded the idea of critical pedagogy to discuss the idea of dealing with multiculturalism and promoting social justice. McLaren (1995:188) argues for "a new set of critical paradigms" accounting for "heterogeneity of pedagogical and curricular discourses and complexity of meaning production in postmodern cultures". The postmodern

(UK), Austrian Academy of Sciences (Austria) and University of La Trobe (Australia).

cultures, marked so much by multiculturalism, then must acknowledge, as he suggests, that the oppressed human subject has embedded political and historical conditions, and that the present condition must not give up struggle against "domination and oppression and the fight for social justice and emancipation" (p. 195). He calls for solidarity¹⁶ over consensus for critical educators, as the former is a step prior to the latter. Solidarity here must be targeted to be potentially more inclusive and more transformative, as Welch (1990:132) would describe and in critical education, the idea contributes to "accounting for the concrete identity and individuality of the Other" (McLaren, 1995:199).

Reprimanding the schools as vigorous mechanisms for reproduction of dominant race, gender and class relations and the imperial values of dominant socio-political order, McLaren (1995:229-231) makes the following axioms of critical pedagogy worth quoting at length:

... that pedagogies should constitute a form of social and cultural criticism; ... all knowledge is fundamentally mediated by linguistic relations [through which all] ... individuals are synechocally related to the wider society ... language is central to the formation of subjectivity (unconscious and conscious awareness); ... certain groups in any society are unnecessarily and often unjustly privileged over others and while the reason for this privileging may vary widely, the oppression which characterizes contemporary societies is most forcefully secured when subordinates accept their social status as natural, necessary, inevitable or bequeathed to them as an exercise of historical chance; ... oppression has many faces and focusing on only one at the expense of others ... often elides or occults the interconnection among them; ... mainstream research practices are generally and unwittingly implicated in the reproduction of systems of class, race and gender oppression.

In this regards, critical pedagogy aims at contesting the "norms of mainstream social life" (McLaren, 1995:231) and thus to divert from the grand-narrative. As educators begin "to expand and refigure the concept of identity/difference" (p. 184) it is important therefore to address the ethnic oppression and the struggle for social justice.

¹⁶ The term 'solidarity' here must be taken in two different aspects, as feminist theologian Sharon Welch (1990:133) describes as:

- (a) granting each group sufficient respect to listen to their ideas and to be challenged by them and
- (b) recognizing that the lives of the various groups are so intertwined that each is accountable to the other.

Media, here, can and should play the ideal role to give "voice of the voiceless" and thereby establish the social justice, otherwise historically denied. The critical education role of media is on call here to fight such oppression and to establish social justice in a multicultural socio-political context.

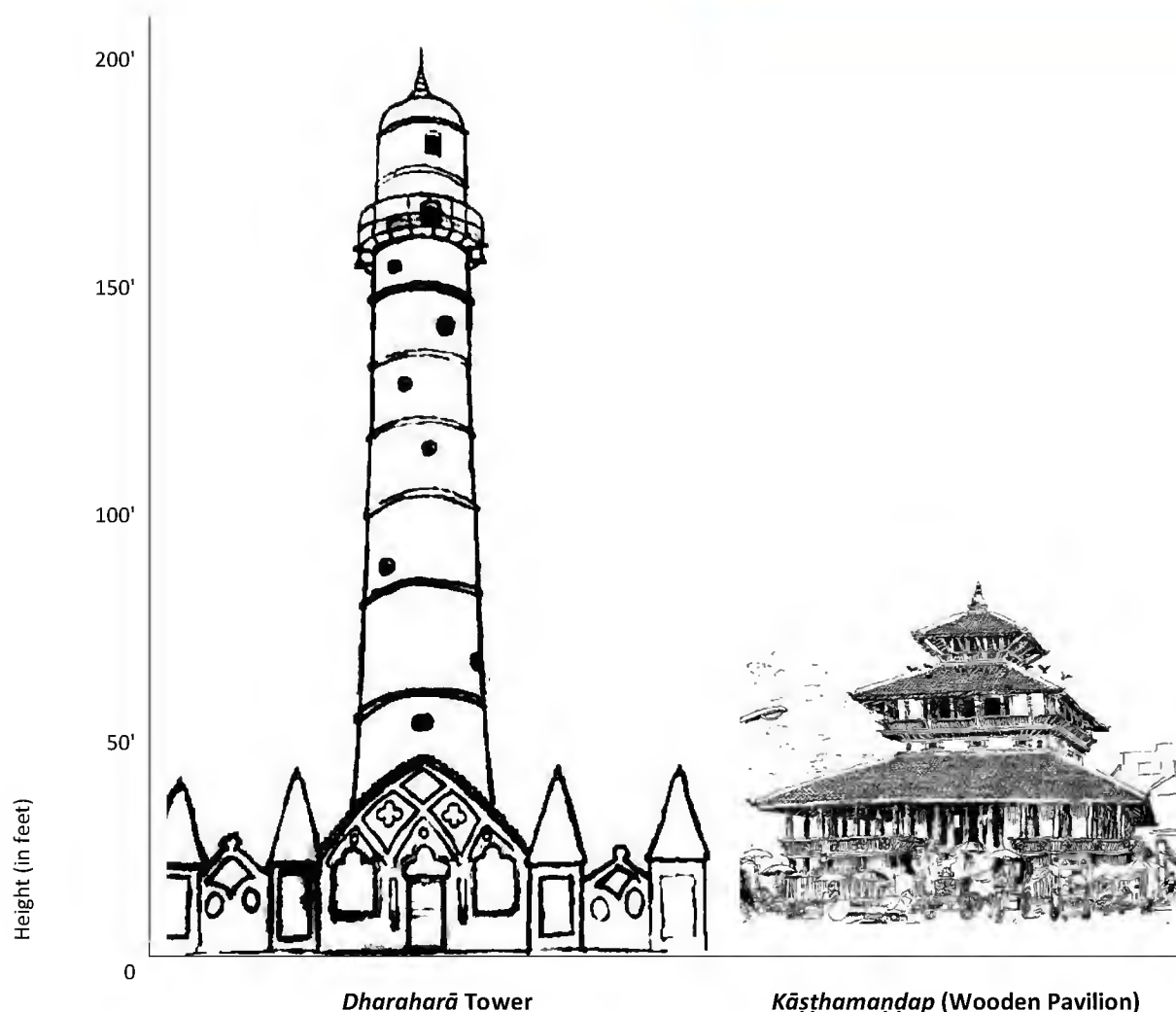
The loss of heritage to the earthquakes may not be restored to their original states in entirety, but the lessons of traditional/ancient knowledge (not just of arts and architecture, but also of governance and political resolution) of multiculturalism and social justice could have been carried on. Solidarity in multicultural context, as McLaren suggests, should be the target to reach a consensus.

Here, the information and education role of media requires serious revisions and reframing. Though the leadership may not have been strong in the aftermath of the 2015 *Gorkhā* earthquake, the media role too does not seem equally strong. While we move ahead in the reconstruction phase, the media should extend its helpful hand further in information and educational role for the betterment of the society. The idea of critical pedagogy and the afore-mentioned discussions of democracy, multiculturalism and social justice, I assert, does help in shaping a proper framework for such educational role of media.

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<i>Alternate name(s)</i>	<i>Bhīmsen Stambha</i>	<i>Maru Sattal Madu Sattal</i>
<i>Type</i>	Tall tower / minaret	Public building
<i>Architecture</i>	Mughal style	Traditional pagoda-style
<i>Storey</i>	9	3
<i>Height</i>	203' (61.88 m)	65' 4" (19.91 m)
<i>History</i>	1832 by Bhimsen Thapa	Before 12 th century
<i>Purpose</i>	Military watch-tower, information-dissemination (Nepal, 2015)	Public / religious / cultural, market-place
<i>Re-construction</i>	After 1934 earthquake	Several times, including in modern age
<i>Fall</i>	First at 1934 earthquake, now collapsed to Gorkha-earthquake	Previously undocumented; now completely collapsed
<i>No. of affected people</i>	150 (Dhungana, 2015) ¹⁷	54 (Nepali Times, 2015)
<i>Death toll</i>	60 (Pokhrel, 2015:56)	45 (Pokhrel, 2015:56)
<i>Present status</i>	Only a 33' (10 m) stump now remains	Completely grounded

Table 1: Comparison between Dharaharā and Kāṣṭhamaṇḍap

¹⁷ Dhungana (2015) reports that 240 tickets had been issued before the incident occurred.

Development Journalism in Nepal: Challenges and Prospects

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Abstract:

Although Nepal, with a rich resource-base for development planners, has a bright prospect for development journalism, the objectives of different plans have not been achieved as targeted. One of the reasons for this is lack of communication between planners and people at the grass-root level. One important tool of communication – mass media, particularly development journalism – is yet to be utilized properly in the country. The objective of this study is to analyze the situation of development journalism in Nepal, its challenges and prospects by conducting an empirical study involving major development actors – development agencies, government, people, and the media. Data collection from a structured questionnaire for development and communication stakeholders was used in this study. The study shows that there is lack of participatory media with a strong local base, of efficient media houses and of trained development journalists. It, therefore, stresses on the need to make development journalism effective, inclusive and diverse by covering all dimensions of development with particular focus on improving the system of governance and creating political will in those who govern.

Keywords: development journalism, mass media, challenge, modes, role of media, participation, news coverage

Background¹

Nepal is a country with huge potentials. It is gifted with abundant natural plus cultural resource and diversity. Similarly, human resource is another major strength of Nepal. With active population comprising of majority of the population, this human resource, if properly motivated, guided and trained, can prove to be a valuable asset to development.

Although Nepal has huge potentials for development, there are various challenges and constraints that have been limiting the process. Almost 31.1% of people are living in poverty in (Government of Nepal 2011). Most of the people are deprived of the basic needs of life like food, clothes, shelter, education and human rights; there are limited few who enjoy all the luxuries of life.

The increasing gap between the rich and the poor or the grass root and the elite is a big challenge for Nepal. And there is an equally great challenge to develop and implement development programs that can meet the real needs of the grass root majority.

In the face of this economic and social disparity, the challenge of political instability and uncertainty has been slowing down the process of development (Todaro, 2011). All the attention of the leaders and resources of the nation have been concentrated towards the futile and never-ending political processes of power struggles. Little attention is given to the real problems of the majority of the people.

On the other hand, Nepal is losing its young and skilled human resource, which is one of the most valuable assets for development. The skilled and capable human resources are disappearing into the foreign lands for employment and education. More than half of the remaining population lives under poverty with all their energies and time consumed in meeting the basic necessities of life. There is very limited human resource for the development of the country.

Next, we have the problems of corruption, bureaucracy, slow decision-making, favoritism, injustice, exploitation, social inequality and exclusion accompanied by the challenges of difficult geography, lack of proper environment for investment, dependency and foreign interferences. Thus Nepal faces various economical, political, social, cultural, rural, institutional, psychological, geographical and

¹ This article is revised from 2013 MAMCJ thesis entitled *Contextual Communication: A Study of Development (With Special Reference to Reflective Dimension of Development Journalism in Nepal)* under the guidance of Prof. Rama Krishna Regmee.

human challenges to development, which will take quite a long time to address.

One of the important measures to minimize these challenges is through bridging the gap of understanding about development and communication at grass-root level and planners' level (Servaes, 2003). So a study that talks of development in the context of development plans and against the backdrop of scholars' views on the concept of development is helpful in making both planners and media look at development in a convergent manner. The concept of communication for development and social change is what the country needs today. The present study is an attempt to respond to the need.

The major objective of the research is to analyze the situation of development journalism in Nepal, its challenges and prospects by conducting an empirical study involving the major development actors- development agencies, government, people and the media.

Development Journalism in Nepal

Development journalism usually refers to two types of journalism (Narula, 1994). One is the investigative journalism which uses an investigative approach to study the development issues. It infers the journalists visiting developing countries and remote areas of the world to investigate their status of development works, challenges and ways to improve them. It is more analytical and explores ways to develop economy and improve lives. It can also be descriptive in a sense that it attempts to document the conditions within a country so that the larger population can understand them (Narula, 1994).

This type of journalism has been emerging as a growing trend from 1960s. However this type of journalism misses the perspective of the people or the users of development. It analyses and covers development only from the perspective of the journalists as well as the government. In the context of Nepal, the same situation prevails. Only government perspective is over reported with negligible or no space of people's voice and perspective.

The second type of development journalism is directly guided, heavily controlled and influenced by the government of the nation (Narula, 1994). In fact, it is deliberately run by the government and is used by the government to suppress its failures and negative news. It provides only government-tailored news and

information and acts as propaganda. Although it can also mean that the government will use the media to inform and educate the people, there are larger probabilities that it will be used by the government to restrict the journalists and media from covering news freely and objectively. It will always lack the balanced perspective and will act more as a government mouthpiece, preventing the people from getting the whole picture (Rogers, 1976).

Nepal had sought to utilize communication for development way back in 1971 AD (Dolkar, 2009). The effort just turned out to be not more than propaganda for promoting the undemocratic *Panchayat* polity. Had it been implemented with a sense of honesty the development status of five development regions in the country would have been different today. Development journalism did not figure out prominently during the 1990s in the real sense.

A recent research shows that only 5% of the development news has been acting as a change agent (FAO, 1984). The rest are heavily based on event-reporting, directed government's or donor agencies' publicity and promotion. There is lack of analytical, as well as well-researched coverage of development issues.

Another major challenge is the lack of follow-ups of development news. In fact, development journalism has always been neglected in the newsroom. Nepali media is always dominated by political and other news. Development news is never considered to be important news, because it does not benefit the media owners directly or immediately.

Although development is mostly understood in terms of infrastructure or economic growth, there is a growing need to understand it in terms of social and human aspects (Kshetry, 2013). Development also means expansion of people's opportunities and the right to choose (Rawal, 2010). It is related with human rights and freedom. In fact, the greatest need of development journalism in the context of Nepal is the need to understand and use it as a social tool in order to solve social problems. It should be used as a change agent, which can change society's behaviour, concepts and action. Development journalism should convince people to work for the welfare of society and be a part of the solution. It should be analytical, well-researched, objective, balanced and always aimed at changing the behaviour of the society and leading towards positivity.

For development journalism to catch on, there needs a fundamental change in the newsrooms (Fraser & Villet, 1994). News editors should start promoting the development journalism philosophy, at least adopting some, if not all of its operative principles. They have to switch over their emphasis on politics to development.

Nepal, interestingly displays a growing appreciation for development journalism although many newsrooms still feel that it would entail a lot of effort and resources to rethink journalism in the face of day-to-day editorial realities. Newsroom editors should examine how the community dialogues can be organized, and process of producing the stories that sets it apart from 'conventional' journalism.

Finally, as a tool for social justice, development journalism can be very valuable. By speaking for those who cannot, a development journalist can inform the rest of the country about important national issues confronted by the nation. Looking at the strengths and weaknesses of the country may also help identify ways in which the nation can be helped. Thus, this style of journalism is a tool for empowerment of the ordinary people to improve their own lives.

Some major areas that development journalism should focus on are listed below:

- Information dissemination and education
- Behaviour change
- Social marketing
- Social mobilization
- Media advocacy
- Communication for social change
- Participatory development communication

Modes of Development Journalism

Journalists covering development in Nepal should be familiar with the mode of presenting development themes in media products. A few points related to the mode may be listed as follows:

- Reporting development problems, development actors, development policies
- Interpreting change, issues, laws related to development
- Explaining the use of technology in development
- Analyzing the cost and benefit of development
- Highlighting the success stories
- Investigating the failure stories
- Interviewing development workers, experts, development NGOs, government officials

- Picking up the concerns and perspectives of local economic and social change
- Recording the whole process, pace and phenomenon of development

Role of Mass Media in Development Journalism

Media plays the role of facilitating, advocating and watch-dogging between planners and implementers. Mass media facilitates dialogue and interaction among planners, implementers and beneficiaries; it advocates issues vital and important for the empowerment of the people and it acts as a watchdog, and controls social malfunctioning. They can do so better by more effective practice of development journalism.

Information and education are the major roles played by the mass media for grass-root communication. Education makes people aware of development. This awareness facilitates their participation in the development process, and makes them own such development initiatives. Therefore, journalists should aim at setting the agenda for development in the country by covering all segments of development and economy thoroughly.

Role of Print Media

Though an old form, print media play an important role in promoting development journalism. The findings show that there is an inadequate, yet balanced coverage of development news in Nepali media as a whole. Most respondents read development news almost twice a week. However, majority rank the coverage of development news in Nepali print media poor. Moreover, development news never gets the major priority in Nepali print media. It is usually, like almost every other story that deserves attention, overshadowed by political news stories. In addition, the development news lacks proper follow-ups and in-depth analyses.

Role of Radio

Grass-root awareness and empowerment is the most important role played by radio in development process. Radio is the major means for grass-root communication. It creates awareness among the grass root communities regarding various important aspects such as agriculture, health, education and so on. Therefore, majority of the respondents think that grass-root awareness and empowerment is the most important role played by radio in development process.

Challenges for Development Journalism

An efficient media house is the most important need as well as challenge for facilitating development journalism in Nepal. A number of media houses in Nepal still lack professionalism and strong resource-base. In the pursuits of commercial as well as other interests, development journalism in Nepal has not been given necessary place and importance. There is an inadequate coverage of development news in Nepali media as a whole.

Major focus of the Nepali media is political news, and development news stories find too little coverage. Lack of trained development journalists is another major challenge for development journalism in Nepal. There is no proper mechanism for providing trainings and skills to report development news Nepal. Development is hardly recognized as a specialized beat for reporting.

Next, development journalism in Nepal also lacks proper coverage of major development priorities of Nepal such as hydroelectricity, agriculture, education, health, economy and transportation sectors. Similarly, the role of development journalism in ensuring equal distribution of development benefits to grass-root level by creating awareness, sensitizing the government and concerned stakeholders has still been lagging behind. Similarly, development journalism in Nepal has not been able to set the agendas for development by covering all segments of development and economy thoroughly. Lack of proper participatory media with strong local base, lack of efficient media-houses and skilled journalists are some other major challenges of development journalism in Nepal.

Lastly, development journalism in Nepal has also not been able to ensure proper participation of journalists (women journalists, in particular) in informing, explaining and analyzing development events, process, projects and plans from the view-point of human rights as well.

In order to address these challenges, majority of respondents put forth the view that an efficient media house with proper infrastructure and policies supporting development journalism is necessary. Similarly, it is also important to train and empower journalists for development news reporting in Nepal.

Women journalists too can contribute to the better practice of development journalism in Nepal by working to engage women in the development works. Development can be balanced and effective, when both men and women equally participate. Women

journalists can highly play a facilitating and encouraging role in such regards.

Way Ahead for Future

On the basis of the afore-mentioned discussions, a future road-map for development journalism in Nepal could be charted. Development journalism of Nepal should produce media-products to improve the system of governance and create political will among those who govern.

Reporting the basics and energy sector, particularly hydroelectricity and other alternative sources, should be given top priority. The sector holds key to energy, instrumental in fueling the whole process. Media reports should address it properly and press planners to develop plans with emphasis on it. GDP growth alone should not be the goal of any development plans today; journalists have to emphasize that the overall growth of the society and the citizens should be the target.

Agriculture-reporting too can be a major sector in development journalism. Since it occupies the basics of local as well as national economy, media products should concentrate on farming, farmers, irrigation, seeds, productivity, agricultural tools, products, agro-market, agro-financing, etc too.

Education makes people aware of development, economic independence makes them capable of accessing the benefits of development process and participation helps people drive the process. In order to make the benefits of development accessible to the people, media products should focus on distribution by sensitizing the government to provide education, economic independence and participation in decision-making. Journalists should aim at setting the agenda for development in the country by covering all segments of development and economy thoroughly. This would open way to develop participatory media with a sound local base.

For all these, the efficiency of media house should be developed for making it cover development in all dimensions for grass-root people. It has to address the need of slow progress visible in development coverage in media. This would most probably answer the current inadequate coverage of development, poor coverage of development news in print media. Moreover, it would strengthen the awareness-cum-empowerment process that radio-development broadcast is engaged in. An efficient media house would also be able to train

journalists on skills of development journalism and employ women journalists in a significant manner.

Finally, emphasis should be laid on developing the right angle in development coverage in media. Journalists should be able to inform, explain and analyze development events, process, projects and plans from the view-point of human rights as well.

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Evaporation of Modi-Popularity in Nepal: An Impression of Nepal-India Bilateral Ties

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Abstract

The Modi-hype heightened through his first official courtesy visit after 17 years in Nepal. Nepalese wholeheartedly welcomed him and his "neighbor first" approach. Innovative cooperation for socio-economic development gained wider popularity from civil society, intellectual groups and media in both countries. However, by changing scenario of Nepali political affairs laid in turmoil arose from process of constitution-making, India appeared intervening the process by zero hour bear massive criticisms by civilians and media which led to evaporate Modi-hype in short span of time that gained emphatically through two times visits after his swearing as 15th Prime Minister of India.

Keywords: Modi visit, impression, Indo-Nepal relation, Madhesh movement, earthquake, blockade, strained relationship, media observation

Historical Visit and Media Emphasis

India's 16th Prime Minister Narendra Modi first made the historic visit in 17 years gap of Prime Minister of India visiting to Nepal with a slew of sops captured the attention of internationally. Times of India highlighted agenda behind historic visit called 4Cs — cooperation, connectivity, culture and constitution — to enhance bilateral ties (*Times of India*, 2014 August 4). Media in both countries keenly observed visit as a historical moment as well as a new shift in Nepal-India relations. During his oath-taking, he remarkably set environment to emphasize 'neighbor-first' approach inviting other South-Asian Leaders on May 26th that threw light on his intent to redefine and create reparations over the damages on bilateral relations with neighboring countries. Modi-led BJP paved the party a majority win in general election, the first time a single party had achieved this since 1984, which set the room for Narendra Modi to become the 16th Prime Minister of Republic of India.

Modi emphasize to include neighbors in regional development that his unprecedented inauguration has set a close tie to include the neighbor countries for development (Ayers, 2014). The initial visit after 17 years gap can be assumed as a first step to renew the relationship with Kathmandu initiating the dialogue between the two nations. Kumar (2016) stressed on Modi's generosity and intention to mend the bilateral

ties and emphasized how India shedding a credit line of \$1 billion for infrastructure, irrigation and energy projects. Media emphasized about special consideration of Nepal in terms of bilateral relation under the tenure of Modi government. His second visit, within a gap of 3 months on the occasion of 18th SAARC Summit¹ again added another milestone in his popularity. His grace strongly knotted the Nepal-India relation in a new perspective, which enabled the two nations to forge a plan for innovative ideas and economic development ties (Sharma, 2014). Modi even played proactive role for increasing interactions between the two nations to retreat prevailed grievances previously in existence.

Modi Impression in Nepal and Its Reflection

Modi's tenure as the Chief of Minister of Gujarat twice records successful tenures in terms of development and economic empowerment of the state. His domesticated impression has echoed to Nepal that appeared most direct and visible when Modi's Parliament speech got broadly applauded in Nepal (*The Kathmandu Post*, 2017:6). Visitors queue and crowd covered the streets to welcome him in Nepal. He was regarded as a liberal leader to consider the

¹ A summit of the leaders of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) member countries. SAARC was formed for regional cooperation in 1985 AD.

development and growth, and was assumed of remarkably considering the regional development. The development agenda introduced by Modi had impressed parliamentary members and other civilians too. His emphasis on economic perspective, energy trade and cooperation are subject to interest for citizens of Nepal and to the politicians. Sharma (2014) explained that the development agenda becomes "a focused theme of political discussion in Nepal". The BIPPA² agreement was signed by Prime Ministers of two nations in 2011, but like many other signed projects with India, it was not ratified. PM Modi visit acknowledged the situation why Indian projects in Nepal are lagging behind and forged the commitment in terms of delivery that was another significant achievement for Modi in Nepal.

Modi's efforts were first to consolidate India's ties throughout South Asia, otherwise called "least integrated" regions of the world by World Bank (Ayres, 2014). Ayres (2014) further claimed that Modi's initiatives reflects clarity on establishment of harmonious bilateral relation with neighboring countries will contribute to build a trust into international community to expand the bilateral relations for economic benefits. There were flow of opinions from politicians, journalist and civil society prioritizing the "special relation"³ between two nations. Modi's visit helped to efface the acrimony, distrust and planted stories in the media from both countries, though it was too early to predict just how long-lasting Modi's initiatives would be and how it would be implemented on real ground. There is no shortage of journalist on both sides to do the dirty job of spinning and planting leaks just to have access to the high and mighty (Jayshi, 2014). Modi repaired such cynical signs to some extent during both visits.

Mishandling in Relation

Most common assumptions regarding the special consideration to Nepal could be two reasons apart from historic socio-cultural ties. Kansakar (2002)

explains the reasons as what India anticipates from Nepal — first one is to extend investment and control over trade possibilities in Nepal, and second significance is to intervene possible Chinese-influence in Nepal from the long past. Ayres (2014) asserted that:

... looking at the neighborhood to strengthen India's economy and by the same token reduce China's appeal to these countries. As Modi pursues a trade-and-investment-led agenda, his approach has the potential to enhance India's influence through its markets, using economic leverage to more fully realize itself as a powerful regional engine while benefitting its economy at the same time.

Sharma (2014) indicated on how Modi's effort towards the "neighbor first" policy lost its glittering charm due to mishandling of India-Nepal relations in the milieu of constitution-drafting though Modi had promised full support to promulgate constitution in his parliament speech during his first visit. Nepali media keenly noted his commitment during the parliamentary speech. With change in the context of political alliance through 16-points agreement⁴ among major political parties disappointed India, as well as many regional political parties of Nepal. The final draft of the constitution could not credit and carry the spirit of all sections of Nepalese as elite-hill supremacy was seen resisting the spirit of series of protests, including the Madhesh movement. Rather, drafted constitution invited continued protests in Terai regions of Nepal.

Bhattarai (2016) reinforced that India found neglected and overlooked for their role in 12-points peace deal⁵ between seven major political alliances and agitating Maoists in 2005. It set the ground for peaceful transition, making impressive strides in a number of areas, ending monarchy, adapting secularism, promoting social inclusion etc. The proposed federalism invited chaos; that was the major reason to prolonged process of constitution-writing and the failure of the first constitution assembly in 2012.

The new constitution finally became an "instrument towards the protest and lost its enthusiasm it could

² BIPPA (Bilateral Investment Protection and Promotion Agreement) was signed between India and Nepal during Dr. Baburam Bhattarai's India visit on 21 October 2011 in the capacity of Prime Minister. It seeks to promote and protect investments from either country in the territory of the other country.

³ The 1950 India-Nepal Treaty of Peace and Friendship forms the bedrock of the special relations between India and Nepal. The 1950 treaty, officially called *Treaty of Peace and Friendship Between The Government of India and The Government of Nepal* aims at establishing a close strategic relationship between the two South Asian neighbors.

⁴ The agreement called 16-points agreement among heads of four political parties of Nepal intended to give stability to the nation with commitment to promulgation of Constitution within given timeframe of Second Constitution Assembly. For the full text, see: www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/nepal/document/papers/16-point_Agreement.html.

⁵ The 12-point understanding concluded between the seven political parties and the agitating Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) ending a decade-long conflict in Nepal. CPN (Maoist) were brought into mainstream politics fulfilling their demands of abolition of monarchy and elections for a Constitution Assembly. The contract was signed in New Delhi in 2005 under active mediation of India.

have by wider participation of all stakeholders" (Jaiswal, 2015). On the other side, Indian media released suggestions for amendment as an immediate response to promulgation of constitution by former President of Nepal, Dr. Ram Baran Yadav.⁶ Nepal-side opposed the recommendations, which was considered as an India's continued reservation and intervention in Nepal's internal affairs.

Many sections like *Madhesh*, *Tharus* and other *Janajatis* of Nepal remained dissatisfied with the constitution and outright rejected the fast-track constitution-drafting process (Cartillejo, 2017). The historically-marginalized sections and communities had high hopes to make the Nepalese society inclusive and democratic in the widest sense.

The political move after the 16-points agreement concentrated towards drafting of a new constitution. This move could not gratify the demands of minorities and Madhesi and Tharu in the Terai regions got agitated, which finally led to violence and protest causing border-blockade. The border-blockade further soured the relation between India and Nepal.

Indian effort of sending India's foreign secretary S Jaishankar as an envoy to Nepal by last days of preparation for promulgation of constitution engaged the political leaders with the intention to urge Nepal government to delay the adaptation of the constitution until discussions have been held to bring all points of view to the table (Paudyal, 2015). A day after Jayshankar left Kathmandu, Nepal promulgated the constitution as scheduled on 20 September 2015. New Delhi issued a statement merely noting the promulgation of constitution (Dhakal, 2015).

Nepal-side opposed suggestions for amendment to address the demands of agitating minorities and of creating the environment of trust to take all parties into consensus. Deep Kumar Upadhyaya, former ambassador to India expressed his displeasure the way Indian media brought the recommendations into light (Roy, 2015). Indian media claimed that suggestions were centered on resolving the political turmoil and protest in Madhesh. Indian-side placed opinions that agitation at border-side after promulgation of the constitution may destabilize the other side of border.

Media Refutation on Earthquake Coverage: Impact on Bilateral Relation

During the hardship of the Gorkha Earthquake 2015, India pledged a billion-dollar for Nepal's reconstruction in June. Paudyal (2015) stated it as rekindling hope among earthquake victims. Khanal (2015) stated of the social media activities of Indian Prime Minister, "PM Narendra Modi tweeted within an hour of the quake and expressed solidarity with the Nepal government and Nepali people and he pledged that India would make all support to Nepal". He further acknowledges how Modi's tweets provided an emotional relief more than what instantly come through in physical terms. Agrawal (2015) indicated on how India began planning a massive cross-border aid mission that Modi showed a keen generosity by admitting an agenda in cabinet meeting to extend support towards Nepal and directing state authorities to make all efforts to support Nepal (CNN, 2015, April 7). Khanal (2015) further pointed towards the enthusiasm shown by India as Foreign Minister of India, Sushma Swaraj conveyed a message to empathize Nepali people and showed dedication to stand together in both joys and sorrows, which portrayed an intimate feeling between the two nations.

Resistance of direct access to Indian movement in Nepal remained an under-exposed controversy, which did not come much at surface. Khanal (2015) claimed of a cold feeling held between the two nations, when Nepal resisted India's pressure for free movement for aid and support. Even a section of Indian politicians lobbied for their direct access to quake victims (Khanal, 2015). Though this state-level controversy went under calm understanding by both sides, Indian media raised another controversy when they started broadcasting exaggerated versions of incidents failing to pave respect for the host country and citizens in pain. Nepalese youth began a campaign on Twitter against the Indian media with popular hash tag #GoHomeIndianMedia.⁷ Khanal (2015) asserted, "journalist from India found involved in manhandling Nepalese Police personnel during the security clearance at Pokhara Airport. Undoubtedly fury over Indian media was an indirect displeasure towards Indian establishment". Though -both nations looked fine over the relations on surface, but each side silently noted the treatment by other.

⁶ First President of Republic Nepal elected in July 2008 who served till, promulgation of constitution through Constitution Assembly-II, Sep 2015

⁷ Retrieved from twitter.com/hashtag/GoHomeIndianMedia?src=hash&lang=en

Karki (2015) highlighted on phenomenon of Indian Media on how their misrepresentation of Nepal imprints negative attitude among Indian people about Nepal. They portrayed bad and inhumane beats and images at Nepalese life and devastation. Karki (2015) further blamed Indian media as insensitive for their activities during coverage of Gorkha Earthquake 2015, "Insensitive Indian media, especially TV news channels, are considered weapons to spread sensationalism and ultra-nationalism in Nepal". Many people feel that Indian media were insensitive towards its smaller neighboring countries and did not respect their concerns.

Similarly, Indian media's quick actions without deliberate review aided crises in bilateral relation. The Indian media dealing with Nepal issue or bilateral ties carries a floating sense of 'big-brotherhood'. The recommendation that Indian media released for amendment in constitution was a kind legacy of this 'big-brother' attitude. Nepal's ambassador to India, Deep Kumar Upadhyay, expressed his displeasure the way *The Indian Express* exposed the amendment recommendation (Firstpost, 2015).

Events Causing Strained Relationship and Consequences

The relationship between two nations got to a different tuning as Modi-government stepped into second year. Modi-hype composed of his visits and shining symptoms of bilateral ties went bit strained, in the context of constitution promulgation, despite agitations held in different parts of Nepal in September 2015. Chaturvedi (2016) presents the crux of problem in Nepal's internal political crises on surface stating "Nepal faced unprecedented political turmoil when a section of Nepali Madhesi and Tharu community of southern Nepal specially feel neglected, unhappy with its provision of political representation, inclusion and federal boundary" (p. 2). These sections of people felt that their feelings and agenda were not properly respected despite their years of struggle and public movements held in Nepal. In making major decisions about the constitution, especially in delineating the provinces of the New Nepal, many news reports and intellectuals argued that a 'Pahade'⁸ hegemonic-mentality dominated the decision ignoring some genuine concerns of Tharu and Madhesi. This failure of

Kathmandu-leaders provided a hot bed for agitation in Madhesh, whose people enjoyed the support of the Modi government (Ojha, 2015).

Chaturvedi (2016) further opines in his article *Structure and Resilience in India-Nepal Relations* that Nepal suffered a serious set-back due to the unfolding crises in Nepal caused an unprecedented economic blockade at strategic points of Nepal-India resulting in shortage of essential supplies in Nepal. When Nepal was not yet able to recover from the earthquake-pain, such political and geo-political turmoil was not an easy situation for Nepalese to bear. India's entanglement with blockade enunciates the point of hatred for the rest of Nepal except in southern parts, where agitation was in full swing. Blockade at major strategic points of border created heavy loss in Nepal's economy and trade, and beyond it caused human crises as the supply of essential goods were cut.

Entanglement of India with blockade also regarded an outcome of aggression of unprecedented response from Nepal over the request of India for free movement of Indian aid and Nepal's reaction to the mishandling of Indian media. However, putting off the suggestion from Indian envoy to postpone the date of promulgation of constitution has fueled India's aggression further. Mahabir Paudyal (2015) talks of how some media illustrated blockade as an effort of Madhesh protest against the ratified constitution:

Nepal has witnessed bitter reality of India's aggression that had crippled economy, business and daily lives in the country. A section of media has portrayed the blockade as outcome of Nepal government's effort to render marginalized Madhesi community voices in politics too.

Mahabir Paudyal appears as a representative of voice of Nepali media (and Nepal in general) to make appeal to the international community to speak for Nepal.

Observation of Modern Nepal-India Relationship

Nepal seeks to maintain an equitable relationship with India, which fell apart through the rise of voice by Nepal-side to review the 1950s Friendship Treaty. Bilateral ties got destabilized due to enforcement of unequal treaties held between Nepal and India. The mishandling of relation between Nepal and India caused anti-India sentiments and the voice was much raised in the context of the political sphere.

Nepal is politically and economically south-oriented. India's influence in Nepali politics has intensified over

⁸ Refers to the community originally residing on hillside of Nepal. They are mostly dominant in terms of population, power, cultural capital and economy.

the past few decades. In Ojha's (2015) observation, "the advent of multi-party democracy in 1990s has shown a consistent trend of increasing and mostly unwarranted Indian interference in Nepal's affairs". Upreti and Sapkota (2017) further reinforce the idea that India's involvements have been fruitful for some of major political move in Nepal and success in political reforms of Nepal, for example, in the movement of liberation from autocratic Rana regime or the 1990 movement, leading to dethroning the Panchayat⁹. Indian leaders, including former Prime Minister came to Nepal and pressed Nepali leaders to overthrow the Panchayat. The intensified interference has crippled the autonomous decisions of Nepal in its internal matters.

CPN (Maoist) waged people's war in 1996 against the government and the then political system, which continued for 10 years claiming approximately 15,000 lives and destruction of property worth tens of million dollars. Multi-level dialogues held with major political parties concluded no results. Finally in the background of King Gyanendra Shah assuming direct authority deposing democratic practice set a common ground for the alliance among agitating CPN-Maoist and major political parties under mediation and surveillance of India. Finally in 2006 the Comprehensive Peace Agreement¹⁰ took place under the direct supervision of India. This journey finally led to the abolition of monarchy introducing an interim constitution directed towards drafting a new constitution by Constitution Assembly.

Nepal went through a long-term unstable political crisis; the historical journey till the promulgation of new constitution has not been easy. Jaiswal (2015) illustrates the political instability pointing repetitions of constitutional reforms of Nepal, "Nepal has had seven constitutions (including the interim constitution) in the past six decades". Further, Ojha (2015) opines that multi-level geo-political crises around Nepal constitution arose not simply because India held more of a role in Nepal, rather there had been long tendency

to look for personal, party interest over the national one. Jayshi (2014) sees the tendency has grown in the form of a competition among leading political parties in Nepal. This tendency yet has been the headache for Nepalese civilians.

Blockade 2015/16: Intensifying Crises

As the crises arose, Nepalese lived with strong aversion towards India's action supporting a section of the nation — Madhesi movement. India did not accept the blame and regard Nepal as solely responsible for its internal turmoil and border crises. Kansakar (2001) asserted that "Indian leaders and diplomatic personnel have a tendency to look upon Nepal with suspicion and distrust, particularly regarding Nepal's relations with China and Pakistan" (p. 27). Further, Bhattarai (2016) argued for restoring the relationship to normal state, "Nepal-India relations have struggled to be back on track, with calls for both the governments to introspect on their "flawed policies" and work towards mending ties" (pp. 1, 4).

After all, the question arose, why India goes unhappy for Nepal's historical achievement? Modi visit won the hearts of parliament and people during his visit, while he encouraged promising to do all necessary supports. During his visit, Modi assured Nepal that India did not want to interfere in its internal affairs (*Times of India*, 2014). All mainstream political parties in Nepal doubt India's commitment to facilitating the process of writing new constitution. despite the fact that India had played a crucial role in ensuring the success of Nepal's democratic movement (Kumar, 2016). KP Sharma Oli was elected the first Prime Minister under majority-support of parliament members on 11 October 2015 aftermath of declaration of Constitution of Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal in September 2015. His tenure, however, did not succeed in proactive engagement in diplomatic handling of relation between two nations and the rift between Delhi and Kathmandu got more widened (Ojha, 2015).

Nepal termed the blockade 'unofficial blockade' by India lining up with Madhesi movement, which crippled the nation in the aftermath of the earthquake. Nepalese expressed their discontent over India's role, which sparked fresh wave of anti-India sentiment. Anti-India feeling reached a record high in Nepal undoing the goodwill earned by Modi and his generous approaches during his visits in Nepal, followed by extended support during earthquake pains. A high time

⁹ Panchayat System: The political system (Panchayat System) was a party-less "guided" democracy in which the people could elect their representatives, while real power remained in the hands of the monarch. Dissenters were called anti-national elements.

¹⁰ Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA): In a ceremony held at the Birendra International Convention Center in capital Kathmandu on November 21, 2006, Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala and Maoist chairman Prachanda signed the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) 2006. See the full text here: www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/nepal/document/papers/peaceagreement.htm

of Modi popularity trashed back and his popularity evaporated quickly. The diplomatic mishandling of both nations derived under the context of promulgation of constitution led to a cooling relation between these two nations. Pathak (2017) asserted that "blockade ruined the bilateral ties those were supposed to take a new height after the rise of Modi in India" (p. 56), despite his visits to Nepal had encouraged for cooperative bilateral relation and initiated for innovative approaches for development.

Bilateral Relation after Modi Rise:

Media Observation

Nepali media has been a watchdog to observe the happenings of Nepal-India relation, covering many dimensions of historical ties between the two nations. When it comes to crises in Nepal-India relation, it incredibly occupies headlines and editorials in both countries. Nepali media stood criticizing Indian approach for mishandling diplomatic relations. Later on, Nepal too had to bear the same criticism exposing immaturity in diplomatic handling by Oli-led government. On the other side, media plays a role to encourage both nations for correction, "the fact is well understood by both sides that either country may be big or small but destiny placed them together that's why each of the country if take other in trust and care about the others feeling would help to mutual benefit and harmony" (Pandey, 2016, translated).

Media spent words in appreciation providing avenues for Modi as a rising global leader. His vision for 'neighbor-first' was a key to unfolding rising hopes in bilateral ties; it was applauded by media and civil societies on both sides. By the confirmation of promulgation of constitution dramatically changed the perception and beliefs, which invited unexpected scenes in Nepal's political phenomenon, and once again love-hate relation¹¹ between these two nations appeared in a new form.

Nepali media blamed India for disruption in supply backing Madhesh protest. This scene led to a historic anti-Indian sentiment to be all-time high as Paudyal (2015) states. Nepali media threw lights to term India's approach as 'insensitive' and 'intrusive' (Kumar, 2016). Media significantly contributed to form a set of discourse in perceiving and handling bilateral relation between two nations, previously praising this relationship and later perceiving golden words in

appreciation of Modi-vision turning to carry a similar mentality like any another Prime Minister carrying attitude of 'big brotherhood'.

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¹¹ The term was used by C K Lal (2000).

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Note to the Contributors

In the second issue of *KCC Media Journal*, we still may not have been able to meet all the following standards mentioned hereafter, as this is the beginning step to contribute to the Nepalese mass media, journalism and communication sector.

We shall, however, endeavor our best to meet all the following standards from up-coming endeavors to the utmost possible extent.

Style

To expedite the review process, we request all authors to submit their contributions based on the format provided underneath, and/or to the style in adherent to the published articles in this journal.

Submission of Manuscripts

The editorial board will review manuscripts for publication in this journal with a basic understanding that it has not been previously published (in full or in part) either in print or electronic form, and is not currently being reviewed for publication elsewhere. Since this is the beginning step, we have not standardized the number of words but we prefer *Research Articles* of approximately 2,500 to 4,000 words not including references, tables and/or figures. These articles may be based on the mass communication and journalism courses provided by different universities at various levels, or on any contemporary issues on mass media and communication. Preferences shall be given to national and/or local issues that shall be directly useful for the nation, but this does not mean global issues shall be given any less priority. We accept contributions in any of the following forms:

Research Article (approximately 2500 to 4000 words not including references, tables and/or figures)

Course-Based Article (approximately 2500 to 4000 words)

Letters to the Editor (not exceeding 1 page, approximately 750 words)

Book Reviews (minimum 1 page and not exceeding 3 pages)

A contributor should submit the following materials to be considered for review:

A hard copy of their Research Articles

A soft copy to be mailed to the editors

A Brief Bio-Data of at least 150 words or at the most exceeding 2 pages in an A4 size (8.27" x 11.69"), major positions held, list of publications and/or researches

A passport-size photo of the contributor(s) either in hard-copy or soft-copy to be mailed to the editors

Articles should include the following components, each of these beginning in a new page.

The Title Page

The title of the paper should be as concise as possible, and should appropriately cover everything in the article. The title page shall not be printed in the journal and is only to be submitted to the reviewers.

The title page should contain at least the following, but not limited to: name(s) of author(s) — first name, middle initial and last name, with highest academic degree(s) and principal position, title, and/or affiliation; name of department(s) and/or institution(s), if any, to which the work should be attributed; disclaimers, if any; name, address, email and mobile number of author responsible for correspondence about the material; name and address of author to whom requests for reprints should be addressed; the source(s) of support in the form of grants, equipment, etc.; if the paper has been presented orally, please give name of meeting, the place and inclusive dates; a running head; a word count.

Body Text

The body can be divided into, but not limited to, approximately the following headings (for instance: Background, Introduction, Objectives, Methodology, Findings, Discussion and Conclusions).

Acknowledgements

The author(s) may acknowledge individuals and/or agencies to assist during the course of their research. It should be made at the end of the text preceding the reference section.

References

The author(s) should take full responsibility of the accuracy and completeness of the reference section too. It is a must for every research article to have citations and references. Research articles without

references will not be considered at all. All the references and in-text citations should follow American Psychological Association (APA) editorial style.

In the references section, however, we encourage our contributors to use full first name and middle name(s), instead of the initials as demanded by the APA style, but this is not as a compulsion. We may develop an outline of a format for both in-text citations and references in later volumes of this journal, all based on the APA style of referencing.

Evaluation and Acceptance

Articles are evaluated on the basis of originality of the topic, appropriateness from the perspective of media and communication, readability, timeliness, quality of the content and readers' interest.

Articles promoting certain company, brands, companies and/or their product or services and not corresponding to media, communication and journalism sector are not considered for publication. All the articles accepted under this scrutiny are subject to editing for uniformity, style, clarity, length and language.

The Parameters for Review

All articles, letters to editors and/or book reviews are evaluated on the basis of originality of the topic, appropriateness from the perspective of media and communication, readability, timeliness, quality of the content and readers' interest. A standard, error-free and readable language and writing style, plus citations and references are must.

Process for Review

After the submission of the article in both hard and soft copy, the article shall be reviewed by at least two different experts experienced in the related field. A separate *Peer Review Policy* for the evaluation and final acceptance of the article shall be followed in this regards.

The corresponding author shall be provided an electronic *Portable Document Format* (PDF) copy of the article via an e-mail. The PDF file will be a water-marked version of the article in our style and publishable format, and shall include a cover-sheet of the cover-page image of the particular issue of *KCC Media Journal*.

We shall also send you a *Disclaimer* outlining the terms and conditions of for the use of the PDF document and the published article. We assume that the article under this review process is not shared in parts or whole, as shall be outlined in the *Disclaimer*, and is not sent for publication or any process thereof elsewhere.

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The final PDF version of the article, with all the corrections is sent only after the actual publication. The full PDF of the journal can be downloaded from KCC website.



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Sr. Lecturer and Film Director

MA (History, TU)

Dr. Suresh Acharya

Sr. Lecturer

PhD (TU), MA MCJ (PU)

Dr. Kundan Aryal

Sr. Lecturer

PhD (TU), MPhil, MA MCJ (PU)

Binod Prasad Dhungel

Sr. Lecturer

MA MCJ (PU)

Laxman Humagain

Lecturer

MA MCJ (PU)

Visiting Faculties

Prof. Dr. Mahendra Singh

PhD (Economics, India)

Mohan Nepali

MA (English, TU), MA MCJ (PU)

Pukar Ghimire

MA (PR, UK), MA MCJ (PU)

Umesh Shrestha

MA MCJ (PU), MBA

Kiran Acharya

MA MCJ (PU)

Bigyan Sharma

MA MCJ (PU)

Baburaja Shakya

Printing Press Entrepreneur

Gokul Pokharel

Senior Journalist

Yam Bahadur Dura

MA MCJ (PU)

Surya Chandra Basnet

MA MCJ (PU)

Dev Raj Aryal

Pursuing Ph.D. (TU), MA MCJ (PU)

Modnath Dhakal

MA (Mass Comm., Pakistan)

Num Raj Khanal

MA MCJ (PU, Gold-Medalist)

Resham Raj Sigdel

MA MCJ (PU, Gold-Medalist)

Dr. Keshab Raj Devkota

Ph.D. (TU), MA MCJ (PU)

Bishnu Rijal

MA MCJ (PU)

Krishna Adhikari

MA MCJ (PU)

Choodamani Bhattarai

MA MCJ (PU)

Shankar Prasad Khanal

Pursuing Ph.D. (TU), MA MCJ (PU)

Nirmal Rimal

Printing Expert

Shambhu Kattel

MA MCJ (PU)

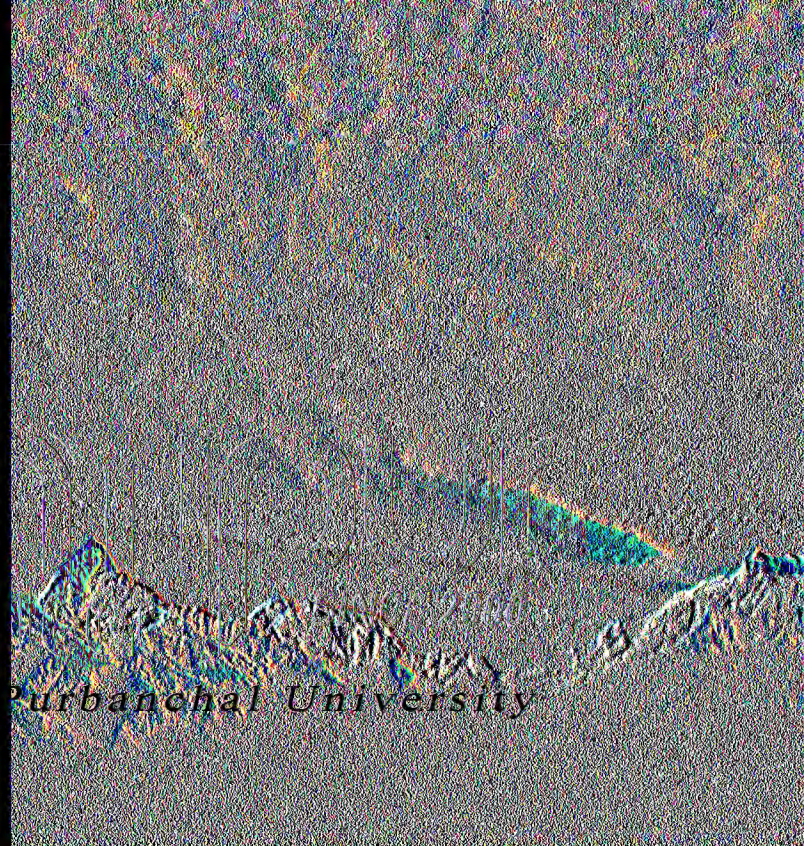
Others

Rishi Ram Rokka

Support Staff, Dept of MCJ

Yubraj Adhikari

Lab Support



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